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# A History of England from the Tudors to the Stuarts

Lectures 1-48

Professor Robert Bucholz  
Loyola University Chicago



Transcript Book

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## Robert Bucholz, D.Phil.

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**R**obert Bucholz received his undergraduate education in history at Cornell University, where he earned his letter in cross-country and track. He graduated in 1980, *magna cum laude* and *Phi Beta Kappa*, whereupon he received a Keasbey Memorial Scholarship for study at Oxford University. At Oxford, Bucholz studied under G. V.

Bennett and P.G.M. Dickson. He took his doctorate in modern history from Oxford in March 1988. He taught at Cornell, UCLA Extension, Cal State Long Beach, and Loyola-Marymount Universities before joining the faculty in History at Loyola University of Chicago in 1988. He currently holds the rank of associate professor.

At Loyola, Professor Bucholz teaches both halves of the Western Civilization survey, as well as upper-division courses in Early Modern (Tudor-Stuart) England, English Social History, and Early Modern London. He has received several awards for his teaching, most notably the Sujack Award for Teaching Excellence, the Loyola College of Arts and Sciences' highest such award, in 1994, the first year of its presentation. He was also the Loyola Honors Program Faculty Member of the Year in 1998 and 1999.

Bucholz's primary research interest is the English court and royal household for the period from 1660 into the nineteenth century. He is the author of *The Augustan Court: Queen Anne and the Decline of Court Culture* (Stanford, 1993); with Sir John Sainty, KCB, *Officials of the Royal Household 1660–1837*, 2 vols. (Institute of Historical Research, London, 1997–1998); and with Professor Newton Key of Eastern Illinois University, *Early Modern England 1485–1714: A Narrative History* (Blackwell, 2003). Bucholz is also the project director of the Database of Court Officers, which will contain the career facts of every person who served in the British royal household from the restoration of the monarchy in 1660 to the death of Queen Victoria in

1901. This is to be launched online by the Institute of Historical Research in 2003.

In 1997, Bucholz was named Prince of Wales Foundation Scholar for Architecture in America, which led, in turn, to his being invited to speak on the etiquette of the public rooms and the experience of going to court in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to Royal Collection Studies at Windsor Castle at the beginning of September. This talk was repeated in 2000 and published in 2001 in *The Court Historian*. His work has been solicited and commented upon by HRH, the Prince of Wales.

Bucholz is past President of the Midwest Conference on British Studies and the organizer of the Center for Renaissance Studies/Society for Court Studies Seminar on Courts, Households and Lineages at the Newberry Library, Chicago. Finally, Robert Bucholz is occasionally asked to give comment on British history and the activities of the British royal family to the Chicago media, most notably *Chicago Tonight* with John Calloway and *Extension 720* with Milt Rosenberg. ■

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# A History of England from the Tudors to the Stuarts

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## Scope:

This course will survey the history of England during the early modern period, from 1485 to 1714. During this time, that country transformed itself from a feudal and relatively minor European state, not much more powerful than contemporary Denmark, into a constitutional monarchy, the wealthiest and most powerful nation on earth, and what some historians have called the first modern society. The backbone of the course will be a narrative of high politics, but it will incorporate the fruits of recent work in social, economic, and cultural history, including the histories of religion, the family, women, poverty, crime, and the arts. In so doing, the course seeks to remind its audience that England was (and is) far more than the king and queen and 12 people who knew them; its history is more than a series of wars and revolutions, laws and treaties. It is equally the story of how the English people were born, reared, worked, played, worshiped, fell in love, and died. The course is pitched toward those who find themselves fascinated by England and its history and who wish to know more. Written by a non-Briton for fellow non-Britons, it assumes only curiosity.

The course begins with a physical description of England and its relationship to the other countries of the British Isles. It will explain how the development of England differs—ethnically, socially, and politically—from that of the Celtic lands, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales. (Although this course is explicitly about England, its history cannot be understood in isolation from that of its neighbors.) The first two lectures go on to describe the physical parameters of English life—the geography and topography (physical, economic, and social) of region, village, and town. Once the material world of Early-modern England has been established, the third lecture will address the mental constructs of English life, contrasting late-medieval idealizations of society (the Great Chain of Being, the Body Politic, and so on) with the reality of England’s social, economic, religious, and political structures as the Tudor period begins.

Only then will we plunge into the political narrative with a brief explanation of the dynastic turbulence leading to the Wars of the Roses (1399–1485). This will be followed by the establishment of the Tudor state (1485–1509) and the reign of Henry VIII (1509–1547). The latter will include his wars, the divorce and English Reformation, and what has been called the Tudor Revolution in government. The later stages of the Reformation will be examined during the reigns of Henry’s three children, Edward VI, “Bloody Mary,” and Elizabeth I (1547–1603). More specifically, the course will address Edward’s promotion of Protestantism; Mary’s attempt to reverse the Reformation through persecution; Elizabeth’s religious settlement (which created the Anglican Church); England’s relationship to Scotland and its ruler, Mary, Queen of Scots; the international tensions that led to war with Spain; Elizabeth’s attempts to relieve those tensions through her marital diplomacy; her relationship with Parliament; and the propaganda campaign that created the image of “Gloriana.” This section of the course will climax with the attempted invasion of the Spanish Armada (1588), the O’Neill rebellion in Ireland (1595–1603), and the peaceful accession of the Stuarts in 1603.

With the death of Elizabeth in 1603, about halfway through the political narrative, we take a “break” to examine the social and cultural history of Elizabethan and Jacobean England. At the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the population was growing rapidly—too rapidly for an inflexible late-medieval economy to absorb. The result was underemployment, rapid inflation, and hard times for the poor. But at the same time, overseas exploration and the growth of trade with Europe were providing new opportunities for the landed aristocracy and urban dwellers. In this context, we will examine “private life” for both the elite (in their country houses) and the common people (in their villages), the problems of law and order, witchcraft, the Poor Law, and the rise of Puritanism. We will also explore the expanding world of London and, with it, the blossoming of Elizabethan and Jacobean culture in art, music, and above all, literature.

We return to the political narrative with the reigns of James I and Charles I (the early Stuarts, 1603–1649) and the tensions that led to the British Civil Wars (that is, the Bishop’s Wars in Scotland, 1637–1640; the Irish Rebellion of 1641 and subsequent conquest by Oliver Cromwell; and the English Civil

Wars, 1642–1660). In addition to the wars themselves, we shall address the trial and execution of King Charles I in 1649; the attempt to form a republic and its eventual replacement by the Protectorate of Cromwell (1649–1660); contemporary discussions of democracy and experiments with religious toleration; and the restoration of the Stuart monarchy in 1660. The course will then treat the reign of Charles II (1660–1685), focusing on the social and cultural life of his court; the challenge of Catholicism there and, in the person of Louis XIV, in Europe; the Popish Plot and Exclusion Crisis (an attempt by Parliament to exclude Catholics from the throne); and the ensuing rise of two modern political parties, the Whigs and the Tories. We will then address the abortive reign of James II (1685–1688) and the Glorious Revolution of 1688–1689. That revolution established the reigns of William III and Mary II (1689–1702), as well as constitutional monarchy and limited religious toleration. It also resulted in a long series of wars against France. Thus, the revolution of 1688–1689 is a turning point in England’s development as a “modern” country. The political narrative will conclude by examining the Nine Years’ War (1688–1697) and the War of the Spanish Succession (1702–1713). In this last war, fought under Queen Anne (1702–1714), John Churchill, Duke of Marlborough, won a series of crushing victories against the French. The ensuing Treaty of Utrecht would make England the wealthiest and most powerful nation in Europe and, quite possibly, the world.

Finally, the course will conclude with an examination of the society and culture of England at the dawn of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The wealth from overseas colonies and European trade, which was guaranteed and enhanced by the settlement at Utrecht, would lead to great prosperity at all ranks, but also to a breakdown of the old class barriers as those in the middle began to move up. Artists, including Swift, Pope, Handel, and Hogarth, benefited from this expanding wealth; while this was also the age of England’s Scientific Revolution and, thus, of Newton, Halley, Boyle, and Wren.

This is obviously a terrific story. But it is also one with direct relevance for 21<sup>st</sup>-century Americans. It was during this period that England became a world power and, in the process, established its American colonies—thus becoming our mother country. That is, the culture of Early-modern England is our root culture, and many of our institutions, laws, customs, and

traditions can be traced back to that time and place. In particular, the civil wars, revolutions, and parliamentary and legal battles described above led to the establishment of a constitutional monarchy, rule of law, the rights to trial by jury and habeas corpus, the first modern political parties, and a kind of popular participation in politics that would lead, ultimately, to democracies on both sides of the Atlantic. At the same time, the English treatment of Ireland and involvement in the slave trade have had a darker significance in the history of those democracies. Thus, this story should be meaningful to all Americans. ■

# England 1485–1714, the First Modern Country

## Lecture 1

**When the founding fathers of [the United States] engaged in revolution against England, they said they did so in order to defend the rights of Englishmen, specifically English ideals of self-government, religious toleration, and inalienable individual rights. Those notions were very rare in the world in 1776. They were born in England between 1485 and 1714.**

**T**his course will cover English history during the most crucial and interesting period in its history. Between the accession of the House of Tudor in 1485 and the end of the House of Stuart in 1714, England transformed itself from a feudal and relatively minor European state, not much more powerful than contemporary Denmark and much poorer than contemporary Belgium, into a constitutional monarchy, the wealthiest and most powerful nation on earth and what one recent book has called “the first modern society.”

Most students of this course will already have a pretty clear notion of why English history, especially during this period, is worth studying. During the rule of the Tudors and Stuarts, England experienced a series of civil wars and revolutions, resulting in constitutional monarchy; experienced a series of reformations in religion that would lead, eventually, to religious toleration; and became a world power and established its American colonies—thus becoming our mother country.

The culture of early modern England is our root culture, and many of our institutions, laws, customs, and traditions can be traced back to that time and place. In particular, the establishment of constitutional monarchy and rule of law; the rights to trial by jury and habeas corpus, the first modern political parties, and a kind of popular participation in politics that would lead, ultimately, to democracies on both sides of the Atlantic. At the same time, the English treatment of Ireland and involvement in the slave trade had a darker significance in the history of those democracies. Thus, this history

should be meaningful to all Americans and to many others throughout the world.

This course will cover the whole of English history from the beginning of the Tudor dynasty in 1485 to the end of the Stuarts in 1714. More specifically, this course is about England and Wales. However, because English history cannot be understood in isolation from that of the other inhabitants of the British Isles or the Continent, the histories of Ireland and Scotland, as well as France, Spain, and the Holy Roman Empire, will enter our story at regular intervals. The backbone of this course will be a narrative of high politics. But the history of England is not simply the history of the English monarchy or its relations with Parliament. It is also the story of every man, woman, or child who lived, loved, fought, and died in England between 1485 and 1714. Therefore, our course will begin, end, and take a break in the middle to examine the changing day-to-day lives of the English people, incorporating the fruits of recent work in social, economic, and cultural history. To help students place this period in a longer chronological context, the course will provide two background lectures on politics for the period before 1485 (covering the Wars of the Roses) and after 1714 (the Hanoverian stability under Sir Robert Walpole).

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**English history cannot be understood in isolation from that of the other inhabitants of the British Isles or the Continent.**

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The course consists of 48 lectures, divided as follows: The course begins with three lectures providing a physical description of England and its relationship to the other countries of the British Isles. It will explain how the development of England differs—ethnically, socially, politically—from that of the Celtic lands, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales. These lectures also describe English geography and topography (physical, economic, and social); late-medieval idealizations of society (such as the Great Chain of Being and other ideas); and social, economic, religious, and political structures.

Lectures 5–20 cover the background and rule of the Tudors. This segment begins with two introductory lectures explaining England’s history for the century or so preceding the Tudors, culminating in the Wars of the Roses



(1455–1485). This will be followed by the establishment of the Tudor state (1485–1509) under Henry VII and the reign of Henry VIII (1509–1547). The latter will include his wars, the divorce and first English Reformation, and the Tudor Revolution in government. The reigns of Henry’s three children (1547–1603), including Edward VI’s acceleration of the Protestant Reformation; Mary I’s attempt to reverse the Reformation through persecution; Elizabeth I’s religious settlement, creating the Anglican Church; the Puritan and Catholic critics of that settlement; England’s relationship to Scotland and its ruler, Mary, Queen of Scots; the international tensions that led to war with Spain; Elizabeth’s marital diplomacy; her relationship with Parliament; and the propaganda campaign that created the image of “Gloriana.” This section of the course will climax with the attempted invasion of the Spanish Armada (1588), the O’Neill rebellion in Ireland (1595–1603), and the peaceful accession of the Stuarts in 1603.

With Elizabeth’s death and the end of Tudor rule in 1603, we take a “break” (from Lectures 20–27) to examine the social and cultural history of Elizabethan and Jacobean England. We will learn about demographic and economic changes; “private life” for both the elite (in their country houses) and the common people (in their villages); institutions and beliefs that held society together, such as religion, paternalism and deference, and kinship and neighborliness, along with developments and conditions that threatened to break it apart, such as poverty and crime; early modern towns and trade; London; and Elizabethan and Jacobean culture.

Lectures 28–44 return to the political narrative with the reigns of the Stuarts. These begin with the reigns of James I and Charles I (1603–1649) and the tensions that led to the British Civil Wars. In addition, we will address the trial and execution of King Charles I in 1649; the Protectorate of Oliver Cromwell (1649–1660), and the Restoration of the Stuart monarchy in 1660. The course will then treat the reign of Charles II (1660–1685), focusing on the social and cultural life of his court; the challenge of militant Catholicism there and, in the person of Louis XIV, in Europe; the Popish Plot and Exclusion Crisis; and the rise of the Whigs and the Tories. We will then address the abortive reign of James II (1685–1688) and the Glorious Revolution of 1688–1689. This resulted in the reigns of William III and

Mary II (1689–1702), the establishment of constitutional monarchy, limited religious toleration, and a series of wars against France.

The political narrative will continue by examining the Nine Years' War (1688–1697), party conflict at the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> century (1697–1702), the accession and personality of Queen Anne (1702–1714), and the War of the Spanish Succession (1702–1713). The ensuing Treaty of Utrecht would make England the wealthiest and most powerful nation in Europe and, quite possibly, the world. This part of the course will conclude with the death of Queen Anne and accession of the founding Hanoverian, George I (1714–1727). The political narrative will conclude with a Lecture 45, explaining how the Hanoverian Succession, and the policies of George I and Sir Robert Walpole, solved many of the constitutional and political problems faced by the Tudors and Stuarts and initiated a long period of political stability.

Lectures 46 and 47 offer a portrait of the society and culture of England at the dawn of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The final lecture will address the significance of England's experience under the Tudors and Stuarts for the history of both England and America.

This course will provide an understanding of the political, social, and cultural history of England. More specifically, listeners and viewers will gain a clearer understanding of the English constitution and rise of the constitutional monarchy; the English Reformation and growth of religious toleration; the rise of England to be the richest, most powerful nation on earth at the end of our period (put another way, why we in America speak English); the great personalities of English history and how they affected its developments; and how ordinary English men and women reacted to those personalities, were affected by those developments, and lived their lives. ■

### Suggested Reading

Bucholz and Key, *Early Modern England*, foreword.

## Questions to Consider

1. Despite coming from nearly every place on earth, Americans seem to have an insatiable interest in English and British history. Why is this so? What does this story have to tell us in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?
2. Some today would dispute the notion that England provided our “root culture” or would argue that the influence of England on the world was often negative. What parts of our shared culture do not derive from English roots? To what extent do the negative aspects of the English experience outweigh the positive achievements described above?

# England 1485–1714, the First Modern Country

## Lecture 1—Transcript

Welcome to one of the great intellectual experiences of your life. That grandiose claim has nothing to do with me. We'll talk about what I'm doing here in a minute. It has everything to do with the subject of the course you have so wisely chosen: "A History of England from the Tudors to the Stuarts."

This course will cover the history of England during the most crucial and interesting period in that history. Between the accession of the House of Tudor in 1485 and the end of the House of Stuart in 1714, England transformed itself from a feudal and relatively minor European state, poorer than contemporary Belgium and the military equivalent of, maybe, contemporary Denmark, into a constitutional monarchy, the wealthiest and most powerful nation on Earth, and what one recent book has called "the first modern society."

In other words, in explaining these two and a half centuries of English history, we will be explaining an awful lot about the next two and a half centuries, and indeed, about the world in which you and I live.

Who am I to tell you this story? My name is Robert Bucholz. I'm a professor of Tudor Stuart English history at Loyola University of Chicago. As you may have been told, I hold my doctorate from Oxford, and I'm the author of a number of books on the period. My particular area of interest is the English court—that is the royal household. If you want to know more details about me, you can read them in the booklet.

For now, I'd like to stress two things that I bring to this course—two aspects of my approach that are only hinted at in my CV. First, as should be obvious by now, I am not English. You know that from my accent. I am an American and that makes a difference. Sometimes not being a trueborn subject of the queen has its disadvantages in my field of study. I'll never forget the one college porter who, everyday for what seemed like years, greeted me at my own college's gates with, "May I help you, sir?" Hint: If you live in England for any length of time, you soon discover that when English

people say, “May I help you?” actually helping you is probably the last thing on their minds.

The biggest disadvantage faced by the interloper on someone else’s history is all the catching up you have to do. Knowledge that everyone else assumes because it’s part of the culture or that everyone is taught from infancy may be a mystery to the newcomer, for example. It took me the longest time to figure out that in Britain, gentlemen do no work. That will be one of the definitions of gentility in this course. Therefore, every time I tried to impress my Oxford supervisors with my American work ethic, I was merely convincing them that I was either very common or very stupid to have to work so hard to learn a history that was to them second nature.

Of course, what is a great disadvantage to the student can be turned into great advantage by the scholar and teacher. First, as a scholar, I bring a different perspective as a non-Britain. There are things I see because of my American take on things that might not be so apparent to a native. Perhaps because I’m not gentle in that strict, Early-modern sense, I do have to work at this professor gig for a living. You’ll find in this course that I bring a lot of attention and sympathy to those who were also not gentle, but who did the work that absolved the gentle from having to do it.

Second, being a trespasser on someone else’s history should render me better able to be a guide to you through it because I know what it feels like to be where you are now: interested and perhaps fascinated by England and the English, but wanting to know more. My long apprenticeship and my battle with my own ignorance has given me, I think, a pretty good sense of what North Americans are likely to know, what they don’t know, what they may find interesting, and what they may need to have explained about this country that gave us our birth, but has developed in rather different ways since.

The second thing about my CV that fits me, I think, to teach this course is that although I am not English, I do bring to the course an English training, years of experience of living in England, and above all, over 20 years’ experience of trying to figure this people out and explain them to my fellow Americans. In other words, this is very much a course presented by an American to Americans, both North and South. That tension between my American heart

and my English interest has been a fruitful one in my life, and so I hope that it will prove fruitful for you.

At this point, someone else—maybe a relative who’s less of an Anglophile than you are who’s listening to this and wondering why you bought this series of tapes—might ask, “But why should we try? Why should we care? Why is this story important?” Having bought these tapes, you probably have some sort of answer for this—maybe a pretty clear notion of why English history, especially during this period, is worth studying.

First, it is a terrific story. If you don’t know that yet, you will. Second, it’s a relevant story. As I indicated, it was during the rule of the Tudors and Stuarts that England experienced a series of civil wars and revolutions resulting in constitutional monarchy and eventually something approaching democracy, and a series of reformations in religion that would lead eventually to religious toleration. It was during this period that England became a world power and established its American colonies—thus becoming our mother country.

This brings me to the most basic reason for Americans to study English history: The culture of Early-modern England is our “root culture” and many of our institutions, laws, customs, and traditions can be traced back to this time and this place. Even if you know no history, you know that England and the United States—Britain and North America—have a special relationship. We saw this in the wake of the events of September 11, when the Star Spangled Banner rang out over Buckingham Palace. I saw it personally from inside Windsor Castle in 1997 when Americans mourned a British princess as if she were their own. Many of those who mourned were old enough to have fought in one of two world wars in which our two countries stood side-by-side to defend what I will argue is a common heritage.

Indeed, even when our two peoples have disagreed, we’ve tended to do so in argument about the meaning of that common heritage. When the founding fathers of this country engaged in revolution against England, they said they did so in order to defend the rights of Englishmen, specifically English ideals of self-government, religious toleration, and inalienable individual rights. Those notions were very rare in the world in 1776. They were born in England between 1485 and 1714.

The civil wars, the revolutions, the parliamentary and legal battles that the English fought under, and sometimes with, the Tudors and Stuarts established not only a constitutional monarchy, but also rule of law, the rights to trial by jury and *habeas corpus*, the first modern political parties, a relatively free press, and a kind of popular participation in politics that would lead, in turn, ultimately to democracies on both sides of the Atlantic. No other country in Europe, certainly not before 1789, can make those claims.

At the same time, it is also very important to remember that the English social, religious, and legal systems; the English treatment of Ireland; and the English involvement in the African slave trade have had a darker, but equally profound, significance on the history of those democracies on both sides of the Atlantic, one that we are all still working out.

Many of us came to this country to escape the religious monopoly of the Church of England or to find economic opportunity unavailable in Ireland as ruled by the British Crown. Or we were brought here against our will by an English legal system that valued property over humanity, or English slave traders who valued profit over personhood. For good or ill, we are all still working out the ramifications of our inheritance from England under the Tudors and the Stuarts. Therefore, this is a story that ought to be meaningful to all Americans.

This is an important story—how will I approach it? What’s the underlying philosophy of this course? That may strike some of you as an odd question. Does history really need an underlying philosophy? History’s pretty straightforward, right? You begin at the beginning and you march on to the end in chronological order, don’t you? Fifty years ago, I might very well have launched in with Henry VII winning the English Crown at the battle of Bosworth Field in 1485 and establishing the Tudors. I would then have carried on through the next 11 or 12 reigns, depending upon how you feel about Oliver Cromwell—is he a reign or not?—and left off with Queen Anne, the last of the Stuarts, on her deathbed in 1714 and been done with it.

For most of the past 500 years, the history of England under the Tudors and Stuarts was the history of the Tudors and Stuarts—that is, a story of kings and queens. Let me reassure you: You will be getting plenty of kings and

queens in this course. You love them; I love them; you can't beat them for ringing declarations. Elizabeth proclaiming, "I have the heart and stomach of a king, and of a King of England too!" James I asserting that, "The state of monarchy is the supremest thing upon Earth!" Or Charles II looking at his portrait and exclaiming, "Oddsfish, but I'm an ugly fellow!" I fully expect that some of you watching the video will be having the same reaction about now.

The example of Charles II reminds us that you can't beat English monarchs for sex and scandal: Henry VIII and his six wives, Elizabeth and her flirtations with men, James I and his flirtations with men, Charles II and his mistresses. Or for fascinating anecdotes: Henry VII taking a former rebel, Lambert Simnel, and making him a cook in his kitchens. Elizabeth slapping the Earl of Essex and telling him to "Go and be hanged!" James I being frightened by the royal salute. Charles II on his deathbed asking that his successor, "Not let poor Nelly starve." This of course turns out to be one of his mistresses, not his wife.

Then there's Queen Anne, on her deathbed, handing the staff of Lord Treasurer of England to the Duke of Shrewsbury with the words, "Use it for the good of my people." These are splendid stories.

Within the past half-century, historians have come to realize that they are not the whole story. Important as kings and queens were at any given time, there were some 2–6 million other people in England whose stories need to be told. The problem with making this course a story of kings and queens and with biography as history generally is that it creates the impression that the history of a great nation was simply a manifestation of the plans, passions, and whims of about 12 people.

Sometimes that may seem to be true. Arguably, the most important event described in this course, the English Reformation, was catalyzed by Henry VIII's lust (or love) for Anne Boleyn. Do we really believe that the Reformation would not have happened if Henry had stayed faithful to his first wife? That it all comes down to that relationship? Or that once he decided upon it, it happened like clockwork? If you believe that, then you have to ignore a growing movement for Reformation in Europe and among



some English people in particular. If you ignore the second, then you ignore the immense loyalty or inertia among English people toward Catholicism.

In this course, we'll learn about Anne Boleyn, but we'll also learn about these broader movements and tendencies. Put another way, historians have come to realize that English history is not simply the workings of the rulers upon the ruled, but a sort of dance between them, in which each partner sometimes led and sometimes followed.

They've also come to realize that great events like the Reformation, wars, and revolutions often took generations to affect the great mass of the people, if at all. One reason Henry VIII could get away with starting the Reformation was that most people didn't notice that anything was happening. Nothing changed in their churches for quite sometime, or in their daily lives for even longer.

This reminds us that the great mass of people in Early-modern England never saw the king or Cardinal Wolsey or the Duke of Buckingham. They cared not a fig for political or theological controversies. They never read or even heard of Shakespeare or Milton, but occupied themselves in the mundane business of living. That is, they spent most of their time worrying about the same things that you and I worry about: growing up, making friends, getting a job, finding the next meal, falling in love, getting married, having children, aches, pains, illnesses, and finally dying and what that might mean.

The traditional history of wars, treaties, laws, and scandals ignored these stories. Fortunately, social historians—heavily influenced by anthropology, sociology, and psychology—have come to realize that they're important in their own right and also for those big political and religious stories that we've always told. To remember that—to remember these people—is to make them live again and therefore to give our ancestors a kind of immortality.

It also reminds us that their problems mattered. Their problems were real and their solutions to those problems were maybe not as crazy as they sometimes seem to us smug moderns.

Finally, to remember our ordinary or common ancestors is to remind us that we too will be the stuff of history. Therefore, I will be at constant pains to remind you that the history of England is not simply the history of the English monarchy or its relations with Parliament. It is also the story of every man, woman, or child who lived, loved, fought, and died in England during the period covered by our course. This is a story that must be told from the bottom up, as well as from the top down.

It's also a story that has to be told side-to-side. For English historians have also finally come to realize that their history cannot be understood outside of the context of the histories of the Celtic lands (Ireland, Scotland, and Wales) and Europe, especially France, Spain, and the Netherlands—not to mention what historians have increasingly come to call the “Atlantic world.”

Let's be clear about this: This course is about England and Wales. It does not purport to address Irish or Scottish history in appropriate detail, let alone that of Europe, but these places will enter our story as England enters theirs for good or ill. The result will be a concise history if not of those countries, then of their relationship to England during the period of time covered by the course.

Finally, this is a story that must be told with a view to what came before and what came after. In other words, England didn't begin in 1485 or end in 1714. I want you to have a sort of rounded vision of what preceded and what followed. In order to help auditors and viewers place this period in a larger chronological context, the course will provide background lectures, first for the period before 1485. We'll cover the causes, the course, and consequences of the Wars of the Roses. You can't understand the Tudors, their actions, or their obsessions without understanding the confused and tragic events that brought them to the throne and that they were bound and determined not to repeat.

Similarly, because so many of the problems faced by the Tudors and Stuarts were solved by the accession of the Hanoverians, this course will include a lecture covering the achievement of civility after 1714 under the Hanoverians and Sir Robert Walpole.

In other words, this course is going to try to tell, to the extent possible, all the stories that made up the experience of the English people between 1485 and 1714 and beyond. My fellow graduate students at Oxford will remember that in those days we were obsessed with “total history.” This will be an attempt at total history.

What does that mean exactly? How exactly will the course be structured? This course consists of 48 lectures divided as follows. We’ll begin with three lectures, Lectures Two–Four, providing a Cook’s tour of England and the other countries of the British Isles. These lectures will explain how the development of England differed ethnically, socially, and politically from that of the Celtic lands (Scotland, Ireland and Wales). In so doing, I’ll also try to explain why the English have been so successful at pushing those people around.

Then we’ll pay a visit to England itself. We’ll range over its geography and topography—physical, economic, and social. We’ll explore its various regions. We’ll poke around an English village. We’ll go to town. We’ll ask the English people what they thought in 1485 about their universe and society and how their economy and politics were supposed to work.

We begin the political narrative with two introductory lectures, Lectures Five–Six, which explain England’s troubled dynastic history in the century before the Tudors. These will climax with the Wars of the Roses and culminate in Henry VII’s victory over Richard III at the battle of Bosworth Field in 1485. We’ll be there as Richard makes one last desperate charge at Henry’s bodyguard, only to fall and lose his crown, which rolls under a hawthorn bush to be placed upon Henry’s head.

Lectures Seven–Nineteen cover the Tudors, who ruled from 1485–1603. We’ll begin with the establishment of the Tudor state under Henry VII and Henry VIII. We’ll go to court and watch as they tame the English Church and aristocracy, make themselves the undisputed masters in their realms, and try to find Henry VIII a wife he can live with.

We’ll meet Henry’s three children. We’ll witness Edward VI’s acceleration of the Protestant Reformation and Mary I’s attempt to reverse the Reformation

by burning Protestants at the stake. We will stand next to the flames as Cranmer, Latimer, Ridley, and other Protestant martyrs are consigned to them.

At the court of Elizabeth I, we'll be present in Parliament as she forges the religious settlement creating the Church of England, but puts off settling the issues of foreign policy, her marriage, and the succession. We'll meet Puritan reformers and Catholic plotters and Elizabeth's great rival, Mary Queen of Scots, with whom we won't be quite so impressed. We'll stand next to Drake as he plunders Spanish shipping during his circumnavigation, reading from Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* all the way, and as he faces down the Spanish Armada in 1588.

We'll be in the crowd as the queen greets her subjects in her coronation procession and defies Philip II at Tilbury and charms Parliament into submission with her Golden Speech.

Finally, we'll shake our heads as we watch the ethnic cleansing of Ireland after a succession of 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century rebellions.

Once the virgin queen dies in 1603, about halfway through the political narrative, conveniently enough, we'll take a break of about eight lectures, Lectures Twenty–Twenty-Seven. We'll return to the village, the town, the court, and the country. We'll commiserate with ordinary people as a population boom inflates their rents and food prices and erodes their wages, making life very hard for Early-modern English men and women at the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

We'll peek into the private lives of the elite in their country houses and the common people in their villages. We'll go with them to church to try to understand their beliefs. We'll go with them to court—not the king's court, but legal courts, to see how they deal with accusations of murder, theft, and witchcraft. We'll follow them to the alehouse to see how they relax.

We'll also follow them when they leave the village to find new lives in towns and in America. We'll go to London and we'll explore it, from the bustling docks of the East End to the traitors heads on London Bridge to the splendid

halls and galleries of Whitehall Palace, where we will hang around the king's bed chamber waiting, hoping to be noticed for our brilliance, beauty, or wit.

There in London we'll sample the delights of Elizabethan and Jacobean culture. We'll go with the courtiers to the Chapel Royal to hear magnificent chorale singing by men like William Byrd and later on Henry Purcell. We'll stand, or maybe sit (we're not quite sure), with the groundlings at the Globe Theatre and watch the plays of Shakespeare being born upon the world.

We return to the political narrative with Lecture Twenty-Eight. Lectures Twenty-Eight–Forty-Four will cover the Stuarts, who rule from 1603–1714. We'll meet James I and Charles I, and we'll watch as they confront unsuccessfully the tensions that led to the British Civil Wars. We'll go to war with the New Model Army. We'll witness the trial and execution of King Charles I in 1649, groaning with the crowd as the henchman holds up the head of a traitor.

We'll watch England experiment with a commonwealth and a protectorate of Oliver Cromwell and try out new forms of government, but also religious toleration. People will read their Bible and be able to expound upon it for the very first time.

Then we'll watch the triumphant restoration of the Stuarts in the person of Charles II when he lands in 1660. At the court of the “Merry Monarch,” we'll jostle with royal mistresses and favorites, we'll cower at the Popish Plot and Exclusion Crisis, and we'll watch the rise of the first two modern political parties in Western history: the Whigs and the Tories.

We'll then address the abortive reign of King James II and his failed attempt to secure a toleration for Roman Catholics. We'll land with William, Prince of Orange, at Torbay to start the Glorious Revolution of 1688–1689. We'll watch as James II tries several times to make his escape from the country.

These events produce the reigns of William III and Mary II and established a constitutional monarchy as well as limited religious toleration. They also started a series of wars against France. We'll embark with the English people on the Nine Years' War. We'll stand on the floor of the House of Commons

to witness the rage of party between Whigs and Tories at the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

We'll cheer the accession of the beloved Queen Anne, and we'll fight the War of the Spanish Succession, in which all of the issues in this course will come down to a few basic questions. That war would end with the Treaty of Utrecht, which would make England the wealthiest and most powerful nation in Europe and quite possibly the world. This part of the course will conclude as we stand at the deathbed of Queen Anne, the last of the Stuarts.

In the next lecture, Lecture Forty-Five, we'll greet the Hanoverian Succession. We'll learn how the policies of the new king, George I, and his prime minister, Sir Robert Walpole, solved many of the constitutional and political problems faced by the Tudors and the Stuarts. We'll witness them initiate a long period of political stability.

The course proper will end with two lectures, Lectures Forty-Six to Forty-Seven, in which we revisit the society and culture of England at the dawn of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. We'll catch up with those earlier social history lectures to see what's been going on in people's lives. As this course closes, the wealth from overseas colonies and European trade, guaranteed and enhanced by the settlement at Utrecht, would lead to great prosperity at all ranks, but also to a breakdown of the old class barriers, as those in the middle began to move up. Artists like Swift, Pope, and Handel benefited from this expanding wealth.

This was also the age of England's scientific revolution—the age of Newton, Halley, Boyle, and Wren. I will also be at pains to remind you during these lectures that a lot of this wealth was built upon the backs of African slaves or poor Irish peasants. While England will be on the verge of being the first modern country in 1714, it will still be a country with gross injustices with which to deal.

The final lecture, Lecture Forty-Eight, will revisit many of the themes of this introduction to address the significance of England's experience under the Tudors and Stuarts for the histories of England and America.

That's the chronology we'll cover. What do we hope to achieve? This course will provide an understanding of the political, social, and cultural history of England. More specifically, auditors and viewers will gain a clearer understanding of the English constitution and rise of constitutional monarchy; the English Reformation and the growth of religious toleration; and the rise of England to be the richest, most powerful nation on earth at the end of our period—in a way, why we speak English as opposed to Spanish, French, or Portuguese.

In these lectures, we'll meet the great personalities of English history and see how they affected these developments. We'll also learn how ordinary English men and women reacted to those personalities, were affected by those developments, and lived their lives.

This is obviously a terrific story. In the course of these 48 lectures, we will encounter 17 kings; four queens; four lords protector; two civil wars; countless foreign wars; a commercial, financial, and political revolution; numerous small riots and rebellions; several changes of religion; *Utopia*, the sonnet; King Lear; the King James Bible; the *Pilgrim's Progress*; and *Gulliver's Travels*.

We'll encounter the lives of Wolsey, More, two Cromwells, Cranmer, Wyatt, Leicester, Burghley, Drake, Raleigh, Sidney, Spenser, Shakespeare, Marlowe, Johnson, Dunne, Inigo Jones, Byrd, Bacon, Buckingham, Laud, Strafford, Pym, Clarendon, Pepys, Evelyn, Milton, Bunyan, Marvell, Hobbes, Locke, Newton, Boyle, Halley, Dryden, Congreve, Marlborough, Oxford, Bolingbroke, Swift, Pope, Handel, Wren, and Walpole. If those names mean anything to you, then you must be nearly as excited as I am to be at the beginning of this course. If they don't mean anything to you, you are in sore need of it. Either way, it is my great pleasure to welcome you to "A History of England from the Tudors to the Stuarts."

# The Land and Its People in 1485—Part I

## Lecture 2

**This royal throne of kings, this sceptered isle, / This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars, / This other Eden, demi-paradise: / This fortress built by Nature for herself / Against infection and the hand of war; / This happy breed of men, this little world, / This precious stone set in the silver sea, / Which serves it in the office of a wall, / Or as a moat defensive to a house, / Against the envy of less happier lands: / This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England.**

—William Shakespeare, *Richard II*, 2.1.

**J**ohn of Gaunt’s dying speech from the second act of *Richard II* is justly famous, for it expresses some of the most fundamental and cherished myths held by the English about England: first, that the water separating England from Europe, the English Channel, has acted as a barrier, protecting England from “infection and the hand of war” and “the envy of less happier lands.” This is sometimes true: Invasions were foiled in 1588 (the Spanish Armada), 1805 (Napoleon), and 1940 (Hitler). But it is mostly false: Invasions succeeded in 800–100 B.C.E. (the Celts), 55 B.C.E. and 41 C.E. (the Romans), 400–700 (Angles, Saxons), 790–950 (the Danes), 1066 (the Normans), and 1688 (the Dutch).

Which brings us to the second myth: that, separated as they are from Europe, the English are unique, eccentric, and (this is usually implied) superior to their Continental cousins. In fact, the English are a mixture of many different groups, including Celtic, Roman, Anglo-Saxon, Danish (Viking), Norman French, Huguenot, Dutch, Jewish, and more recently, West Indian, Pakistani, and Indian. The English have *always* been open to cultural influence. Living on an island, they are natural seafarers, highly dependent on trade. Their culture has, therefore, been heavily influenced by that of Europe.

There is a third myth associated with the passage that opened this lecture: that somehow England *is* the island. It is, in fact, only the southeastern portion of an archipelago called the British Isles. The English share their archipelago with three other peoples: the Scots, the Irish, and the Welsh. But the English



state and society developed differently from the Celtic lands. England is closer to Europe; thus, it is subject to greater European influence and a greater intermixture of peoples. England is flatter, gentler, and more fertile than the rest of the British Isles. This meant that it was easier to conquer by foreign invaders, had greater population density, and was wealthier. England was united under a strong monarchy. By the 9<sup>th</sup> century, the Anglo-Saxon kings of the House of Wessex had united England and established strong institutions of government, including a central treasury; a central secretariat, or chancery; strong local government that divided the country into shires, each headed by a shire reeve, or sheriff; and a strong militia, the *fyrð*. By contrast, the Celtic lands were more remote from Europe; rockier, hillier, and more rugged; less fertile; less densely populated; less wealthy; and organized by tribe and clan. They were later or never united under a strong central monarchy. As a result, it was easy for English kings to push them around, invade, or conquer them.

Wales was conquered by Edward I in 1284. Northern Wales was now to be governed by the Prince of Wales (that is, the king's eldest son); Southern and eastern Wales were to be governed by great aristocrats called Marcher Lords. The Welsh retained their language and law. Scotland remained independent until 1707. Before 1707, Scotland was led by a weak monarchy, sometimes under English domination, sometimes closely allied with the French (the "Auld Alliance"). It was frequently at war with England along the border. The two crowns were united in one wearer with the accession of James I in 1603 and became one by the Act of Union in 1707.

Ireland was subject to English invasion and settlement throughout the Middle Ages. The Old English settlers often clashed with the native Gaelic population. Neither felt much loyalty to the English Crown. Our time span saw periodic resistance to English rule, often erupting into rebellions; retribution and attempts to tighten control by the English Crown through the establishment of a garrison; the deprivation and relocation of Gaelic landowners; and the plantation of English and Scots Protestant settlers in their place. This led to more resentment, rebellions, retribution, and a bloody cycle of violence, repression, and hatred. By the end of our period, Protestant landowners had enacted a series of penal laws against Catholics that stripped them of political, economic, and religious rights. Thus, the history

of England's relationship with the Celtic lands is fraught with violence, bitterness, oppression, and distrust.

Scotland and Wales remain part of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland but have been granted their own legislatures. After the Irish Rebellion of 1916, the 26 counties of southern and western Ireland achieved semi-independent dominion status in 1921 and full independence as the Republic of Ireland in 1937. The six counties to the northeast (Ulster) remain in the Union. The debate between Protestants and Catholics over the political future of Northern Ireland is a source of bitter contention and periodic violence to this day.

England's internal geography has had a profound effect on its human history. The Home Counties and Southeast were and are the most populous and wealthiest part of the nation, as well as its political, economic, and cultural center. The Midlands, North, West Country, and East Anglia were all remote from the capital and from Europe, less populous and wealthy, and more prone to rebellion. Thus, their relationship to the southeast is not unlike that of the Celtic lands to England writ small.

Geographical and topographical differences produced economic, social, cultural, and political differences between the remote outer parts of England and the wealthy, populous, and powerful south. The resulting tensions will be important in our story.

English topography has likewise profoundly affected English history. Admittedly, mountains were not very important to that history. No mountains in England are very high. There is but one major range, the Pennines, running up the spine of the North Country. Rivers were much more important. The Thames, flowing west to east, provided the major entry point to the interior for the Celtic and Anglo-Saxon settlers and a major highway for the trade that made London possible. Other rivers (the Severn and Avon to the west; the Medway, Great Ouse, Humber, Tees, Trent, and Tyne to the north) were crucial trade highways into the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

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**England's internal  
geography has had  
a profound effect on  
its human history.**

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**The Thames River, a major entry point for settlers and an important trade route, made London possible.**

Forests were much important as sources of raw materials and much more widespread from 1485 to 1714 than they are today. Technically, they were royal property, for hunting. In fact, they were home to small groups of people who were dependent on a forest economy based on sheep farming, lumber, mining, tinkering, and poaching the king's game.

The English climate is often accused of being dreary and rainy. In fact, its mildness—never very hot nor very cold—is terrific for certain kinds of agriculture. Thanks to the moderating influence of the Gulf Stream, the English climate is especially good for growing of heavy grains—important for feeding England's people.

Obviously, geography is, to a great extent, destiny. It goes far to explain how each of these countries and regions developed politically, socially, and culturally. Some have gone farther to argue that the climate of the British Isles has produced a certain kind of personality: quiet, studious, not given to extremes of emotion. The following lectures will offer plenty of evidence against this stereotype. Having come to know their land, it is now time to meet the people of early modern England. ■

## Suggested Reading

Bucholz and Key, *Early Modern England*, introduction, secs. 1–3.

Morrill, *Tudor and Stuart Britain*, chaps. 1, 3, 4.

## Questions to Consider

1. Given the general inaccuracy of the “island mentality” myth, why did the English embrace it?
2. This lecture has emphasized the different histories and cultures of the English, Irish, Scots, and Welsh. What do they have in common besides their geographical location? Why have they been unable to see past their differences to what is common in their heritage and interests?

# The Land and Its People in 1485—Part I

## Lecture 2—Transcript

To understand the people, you have to understand the land. For the land and the people shape each other. Nowhere has this been truer than in England. Take the most obvious thing that everyone thinks they know about the English people—that they are an island race. This lecture will begin with the myth and the reality of the “island mentality.” It will then move on to England’s troubled relationship to both Europe and the other countries of the British Isles: Scotland, Ireland, and Wales. We’ll conclude with the geography of England and its various regions, arguing throughout the lecture that geography is destiny.

I can think of no better place to begin than with the most famous thing ever written about England:

This royal throne of kings, this scepter'd isle,  
This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars,  
This other Eden, demi-paradise:  
This fortress built by Nature for herself  
Against infection and the hand of war;  
This happy breed of men, this little world,  
This precious stone set in the silver sea,  
Which serves it in the office of a wall,  
Or as a moat defensive to a house,  
Against the envy of less happier lands:  
This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England.

John of Gaunt’s dying speech from the second act of *Richard II* is justly famous, for it expresses some of the most fundamental and cherished myths held by the English about their country. The first of these is that the water separating England from Europe, the 26-mile-wide English Channel, has acted as a barrier, protecting England from “infection and the hand of war”—basically rabies and the French.

This has sometimes been true. In 1588, as we’ll see in Lecture Eighteen, it prevented invasion by the Spanish army, which was to have been transported

across the English Channel by Philip II's Spanish Armada. In 1805, after the period of time covered by these lectures, it blocked the similar attempt by Napoleon Bonaparte. In 1940, within the memory of some listeners and viewers, it frustrated Operation Sea Lion, Hitler's plan for the conquest of Great Britain. Perhaps you remember the photograph of Hitler and his generals in their peaked caps looking across the English Channel at the white cliffs of Dover upon which they would never set foot.

At crucial moments in its history, the English Channel and Britain's island status have been crucial to the preservation of England, and later Britain, as a sovereign state, but in fact, for most of English history, the myth is false. The myth is a myth. Invasions succeeded repeatedly. Between 800 and 100 before the Common Era [B.C.E.], there were multiple waves of Celts. In 55 B.C.E. and more permanently in 41 of the Common Era [C.E.], there were the Romans under Julius Caesar and then under the orders of the Emperor Claudius. Between 300 and 700, there were waves of Angles, Saxons, and Jutes. Between 780 and 1066, there were waves of Vikings. In 1066, most famously, the Normans under William the Conqueror invaded quite successfully. In 1688, towards the end of this course, the Dutch under William of Orange will launch a successful invasion of England.

In fact, I remind you that the easiest way to get from place to place before the 19<sup>th</sup> century was by water. You just built a boat and let the current carry you. It could be argued that the English Channel and River Thames, up which invaders almost always penetrated the countryside, actually facilitated England's repeated conquest.

All those successful invaders bring us to the second myth. That myth goes something like this: Separated as they supposedly are from Europe, the English are unique, eccentric, and (this is usually implied) somehow superior to their continental cousins. Certainly, this course will argue that the English are not the Spanish or the French. Their state and society developed along very different lines from most of their European counterparts. Certainly, successive English governments often acted towards the other inhabitants of the British Isles, the inhabitants of Europe, and eventually the inhabitants of the world as if God was an Englishman, and the earth and its less fortunate inhabitants given for the use of his new chosen people.

The island mentality was usually not so much aggressive as indifferent or mildly condescending to everybody else. Hence the famous, if probably apocryphal 19<sup>th</sup> century headline, “Fog in Channel: Continent Isolated.”

Of course, there is usually no fog in the Channel, which reminds us that in fact, the English are a mixture of all those different invading groups. They are Celts, Romans, Anglo-Saxon, Danish, Norman, Huguenot French, Dutch, Jewish, and more recently West Indian, Pakistani, and Indian. In fact, the English have *always* been open to cultural influence. They live on an island. They had no choice. They were natural seafarers and therefore highly dependent on trade. Their culture has, therefore, been heavily influenced by that of Europe and beyond.

Take, for example, the English language. You will hear commentators, often based at one of the two medieval universities, complain of the corruption of English by new words, slang, and sloppiness of speech. Guess where this usually comes from: the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, or even parts of Britain that are not Oxford. The trouble with this view is that the Queen’s English has never been pure or frozen. It is a mixture of what worked—of Celtic, Latin, Anglo-Saxon, Danish, French, Dutch, etc.

As this implies, the English language is a constantly evolving construct. Moreover, at any given time, it’s also varied by region in accent, vocabulary, and syntax—a fact that the BBC (the British Broadcasting Company) and the OED (the Oxford English Dictionary) have only just recently begun to fully realize.

So in other things: The best restaurants in London are foreign. Like us, the English often prefer French wine, German cars, and Italian art. In fact, at the risk of taking on another myth, could it be that that famous rivalry with the French, which will play such an important role in our course, is really a matter of envy for a culture to which the English are profoundly attracted?

There’s a third related myth associated with the passage from Shakespeare that I quoted previously: that somehow England *is* the island, or at least the only part of it that matters. It’s very important for you to remember that England is only the southeastern portion of an archipelago called the British

Isles. Americans often forget this, but then they have an excuse, because so do the English.

Let's discuss: Up to this point, we've talked only of England. In fact, the English share their archipelago with three other peoples: the Scots, the Irish, and the Welsh. They are geographically, ethnically, and culturally distinct from the English and from each other, though for our purposes I will sometimes lump them all together as the "Celtic lands."

The easiest way to insult the culture and experience of these people is to forget this difference. Put another way, England developed very differently from these other lands. Let's examine that difference.

We will explore the geography of England in greater detail later in this lecture. For now, it's very important for you to understand that England is flatter, gentler, and more fertile than the Celtic lands. This meant that it was easier to conquer by foreign invaders. It always had greater population density and it was always wealthier, being more fertile. Moreover, England is the closest part of the British Isles to Europe, so it is subject to more European influence and a greater intermixture of peoples. We've made this point.

That is, while the whole of the British Isles was settled by various waves of Celtic peoples, only England saw a large intermixture of the later invaders: Romans, Angles, Saxons, Danes, and Norman French. They only went, by and large, to England. Indeed, it was the Angles who gave England its name: "Angle-land," to differentiate it from the land inhabited by the Scots, the Welsh, and the Irish.

Each of these groups brought their own forms of government, their own societal organizations, and their own cultural traditions that were never experienced by the other three countries. Moreover, in part because of the need to resist further invasions, England was united early under a strong monarchy. That's the most important piece of development that differs from these other countries.



By the ninth century, the Anglo-Saxon kings at the House of Wessex had united England under their rule and established strong centralizing institutions of government. That is, they established a strong central treasury; a central secretariat called a “chancery;” and strong local government. It was the Anglo-Saxon kings of Wessex who divided the country into about 40 shires, each headed by a shire reeve, or a sheriff. They established a strong militia called the *fyrð*, and an efficient land tax called the *heregeld*.

These institutions made it possible for the English to resist the Danes under King Alfred between 871 and 899 and to unify England under King Athelstan between 924 and 939. Finally, these developments made it possible for England to invade their neighbors, the Celtic lands.

By contrast with England, the Celtic lands were all more remote from Europe—rockier, hillier, more rugged, less fertile, less wealthy, and less densely populated. Their people lived in isolated settlements, organized by tribe and clan. A “clan” was a political and social unit whose members claimed to be descended from a common ancestor and who acknowledged the leadership of the clan chief. In practice, many of the members of the clan were not actually related to each other, but virtually all were tenants of this clan chief. His power over them was nearly absolute. Like an extended family, the clan did provide members sustenance and protection and a sense of belonging. In return, they had to give loyalty and military service.

The most important thing that you have to note about clans, and the reason I brought them up, is that loyalty to the chief far outweighed loyalty to any concept of a nation or to any centralizing institution like a monarchy. In other words, the Celtic lands would meet English unity and organization with disunity and disorganization. This was William Wallace’s (or maybe Mel Gibson’s) problem in the film *Braveheart*.

I will have occasion to bring up films in the course of this course. I will often take great delight in pointing out the occasions on which they get history wrong, which are legion. *Braveheart*, for example, has no bridge at the battle of Stanford [sic Stirling] Bridge. It has William Wallace falling in love with a French princess who actually arrives in England in real history five years after his death.

Sometimes films get it exactly right. Do you remember those scenes in which Edward Longshanks's army is marching through Scotland—they're in serried ranks, they have mounted knights and a baggage train? They're organized. They're impressive. They're an army. Now, do you remember William Wallace's troops, the various clans people that he constantly has to rally to try to fight the English? They're dressed in what look like, I don't know, pajamas? That's about right.

Because of the Celtic lands' geography, topography, and relative infertility, no one took the trouble to conquer them before the English did. Because they were never conquered and had little contact with Europe, they remained Celtic in culture and language well into the Middle Ages. Because their harsh climates, rough terrain, and poor economies worked against the growth of a thriving court city, roads, and easy communication, clan loyalties remained clan loyalties, rather than national loyalties. They were stronger than any loyalty to some king of Scotland or some high king of Ireland. In other words, the Celtic lands never developed the strong centralized monarchies or effective national government that would have enabled them to resist the English.

Instead, most clans fought each other in their own interests over land, cattle, and women. Sometimes they'd ally with the English king, sometimes against their own fellow Scots, Irish, or Welsh, as it suited the clan chief's purpose. All of this made it easy for the kings of England to push them around, invade or conquer them.

Take, for example, Wales. There had been a Prince of Wales, most notably the 13<sup>th</sup> century Llewellyn ap Griffith. He had neither the institutions of strong government at his disposal, nor the complete loyalty of the Welsh clan. In 1284, after defeating Llewellyn, Edward I of England (that's Edward Longshanks) imposes the Statute of Rhuddlan. Northern Wales was to be governed by the Prince of Wales, but now the Prince of Wales was to be the eldest son of the English king. Southern and Eastern Wales were to be governed by great Anglo-Welsh aristocrats. They're called Marcher Lords, because they live on the Welsh marches (troops marching around).

English criminal law was imposed, though the Welsh did retain their language and their civil law. The English also established some English-style shires and filled the administration with Englishmen. Later, during our course, the Tudors would abolish the Marcher Lords entirely. They'd impose full unification by the Act of Union of 1536, and they'd establish a Protestant Church of Wales.

In fact, these policies were largely successful. Wales is the only one of these countries that's pretty successfully integrated into the English system during our period. It's true that Northern Wales would remain remote and less densely populated and more Celtic, as well as wildly beautiful, if you've ever seen it. The more populous and wealthy Southern Wales was successfully integrated into the English economy and governmental system. During our period, its rich farm land, and later on its rich coal deposits, would make it an essential part of the English economy.

Scotland, on the other hand, resisted absorption by England throughout the Middle Ages and remained independent until 1707. But it was led by a weak monarchy. The Scottish monarch was never in complete control of the wild northern highlands. Sometimes, he was propped up by the English king. Sometimes, he was hostile to England, in which case he would usually be propped up by—and allied with—the French. This alliance was known in Scottish history as the “Auld Alliance.” It will be very important in our course. That combination of France's power with Scotland's location was profoundly worrying to the English. The Scots themselves were too weak and poor to be much of a challenge to English sovereignty, but if they had French help, then there was a recipe for disaster.

The two countries fought frequently along the 110-mile border between them, often over England's attempt to make Scotland a satellite. In 1314, Robert the Bruce seemed to have established Scotland's independence with a resounding victory at the battle of Bannockburn. The next three centuries saw repeated English attempts to undo that victory, sometimes through war and sometimes through diplomatic marriage. We get both in our period. For example, at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Henry VII worked out an alliance by marrying his daughter, Margaret, to Scotland's James IV. Details to follow in Lecture Seven.

In the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century, Henry VIII tried to force his young son, the future Edward VI, on the infant Mary, Queen of Scots, with much less success, as we'll see in Lecture Thirteen. The failure of that courtship drove the Scots into the arms of the French and threatened English political stability for a generation.

Finally, in 1603, the two crowns were united in one by a descendant of that James-Margaret marriage, when James VI of Scotland became James I of England. The enmity between the two countries remained because they had different histories and different religious traditions. By the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the English were Anglican and the Scots were Presbyterian. They continued to be governed by separate institutions until they became one by the Act of Union in 1707.

The history of English relations with Ireland is the most fraught and tragic of these three. This has had a profound effect on the whole history of the Atlantic world. The ancient history of Ireland is pretty obscure, but it seems clear that the native Gaelic clans of Ireland were never subdued into a national monarchy. I know that sometimes you'll read about a high king of Ireland, but it's very clear that he didn't have strong institutions of government like a chancery or the loyalty of all the Gaelic clan leaders in Ireland.

Anglo-Norman settlers invaded in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. These came to be known as the Anglo-Irish. During the later Middle Ages, the Gaelic clan leaders sometimes fought with—and sometimes allied with—individual Anglo-Irish settlers, sometimes against other clans and sometimes against the English Crown. The impression you should get here is of disunity, confusion, and every little group pretty much out for its own interests. As this implies, the King of England didn't really have much power in Ireland during the Middle Ages. Everyone was out for themselves.

As a result, as this course opens, English control was actually in decline. In 1485, the King of England's power was confined to an area around Dublin known as “the pale.” To be “beyond the pale” was to be subject to the whims of feuding Anglo-Irish lords and Gaelic clan chiefs.

Successive kings of England couldn't make up their minds what to do about this. Sometimes they'd ally with a few great families: the Fitzgeralds or the Butlers. Sometimes they'd play those families off against each other. Sometimes they just tried to break them.

That vacillation, coupled with the attempt to impose a Reformation on Ireland after 1536, resulted during our period in lots of resentment, which bred periodic resistance, which erupted into rebellions against English rule. Rebellion would be followed by retribution and attempts to tighten control of the English Crown. The Tudors established a garrison, deprived and relocated Gaelic landowners, and planted English and Scots Protestant settlers in their place. This of course bred more resentment, more rebellions, and more retribution in an endless cycle of violence.

By the end of the period covered by this course, that cycle resulted in Protestant domination of Irish land, political and economic power, and a series of penal laws against Catholics that stripped them of political, economic, and religious rights.

In other words, the history of England's relationship with the Celtic lands is fraught with violence, bitterness, oppression, and distrust. Today, Scotland and Wales remain part of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, but the Catholic minority in Ulster is not alone in feeling like second-class citizens in the British polity. Old ethnic prejudices die hard. I remember as a graduate student at Oxford that it was still possible to hear Irish jokes on British national television in the 1980s. During the 1980s, Margaret Thatcher's policies were particularly hard on those parts of the Celtic lands that depended on heavy industry.

Both countries now have strong devolution movements. The creation of the European Union has given them an opportunity to argue that their nations could stand alone, apart from England politically, militarily, and economically. As an attempt to assuage their feelings, the Blair government has granted separate independent legislatures to each country.

As for Ireland, following the Easter Rebellion of 1916, the 26 counties of southern and western Ireland achieved semi-independent dominion status in

1921, and then became fully independent as the Republic of Ireland in 1937. The six counties to the northeast (Ulster) remain in the British Union. As you know only too well, the debate between Protestants and Catholics there over their political future remains a source of bitter contention and periodic violence to this day.

Overall, it remains to be seen whether the dominance of the archipelago that the Tudor and Stuart kings of England achieved will survive this century, or whether Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland will go their separate ways as has the Republic of Ireland.

What about England itself? How has its geography shaped its people? In some ways, the regional tensions that I just described between England and the Celtic lands are played out on a smaller scale between the fertile and economically powerful Southeast of England and the outlying parts to the north and the west.

By the Southeast, I mean the Home Counties, the counties surrounding London, and also perhaps Sussex and Hampshire. These are the most populous and the wealthiest part of the nation. They form its economic, cultural, and political center because London is there in the Home Counties. When you think of England, you probably think of the Southeast's bustling urban areas or the Southeast's gently rolling downs. When you conjure an English accent, it's a Home Counties and southeastern accent of which you're probably thinking.

By contrast, the Midlands, the far North, the West Country, and East Anglia were all more remote from the capital and from Europe. They are more rugged in terrain and therefore more suited for pastoral sheep farming than arable crops. They were less populous and wealthy, and more prone to rebellion. In other words, they're a bit like the Celtic lands. They're less well populated, less highly developed economically, and more remote from London.

As with Ireland, the Welsh marches, and the Scottish border, English monarchs tended to rely on great landed nobles—great magnates—to maintain peace in these areas. More often than not, these great nobles

became laws unto themselves. “I’ll maintain the peace for you, your majesty, but I’ll do it in my own interests.” They tended to build up vast networks of clients and retainers known as “affinities.” They used these affinities to attack other nobles and sometimes to attack the king.

The geographical/topographical differences that we’ve described produced economic, social, cultural, and political differences between the remote outer parts of England and the wealthy, populous, powerful south. The resulting tensions will be an important part of our story. That is to say, it will be these outlying areas that will mostly tend to rebel. Geography is destiny.

It’s also topography. Mountains were not really very important in English history. None are very high. The tallest in England, if you count Wales as part of England, is Mount Snowden at about 3,560 feet. I once walked to the top of the third highest mountain in Wales dressed pretty much like this. There is but one major range, the Pennines, running up the spine of the North Country. The hilly terrain of the North did have military consequences early on, but that’s about it.

Rivers are far more important. The Thames, flowing west to east, provided the major entry point to the interior for the Celtic and Anglo-Saxon settlers and subsequent invaders. It was a major highway for trade, which—as we’ll see—made London possible. Other rivers—the Severn and Avon to the west; the Medway, Great Ouse, Humber, Tees, Trent, and Tyne to the north—were crucial trade highways into the 19<sup>th</sup> century—a major form of communication in England. Only at the end of our period will a system of turnpikes and local roads offer much of an alternative to travelers and merchants.

If we were to manage a field trip to England in 1485, the natural feature that would strike us first would be the trees. Forests were everywhere, much more widespread in 1485 than they would be in 1714 and certainly than they are today. Technically, all forests are royal property. They’re set aside for the king’s hunting and to supply his tables. They were protected by forest law. Fortunately, this law wasn’t very strictly enforced, so the forests were home to small groups of people living in tiny hamlets depending on a forest economy. They lived by sheep farming, lumber, mining, and poaching the king’s game.

Any geography should include a discussion of forests, but also a discussion of natural resources. England was blessed with them, but many things that we consider natural resources today were not so important in a pre-industrial age. For example, tin abounded in the West Country and coal in South Wales, the Midlands and the North, but they were both too expensive to mine to be really significant economically. Almost no one can afford to burn coal in their homes as this course begins.

Next to water, trees are probably the most important natural resource in England. A lot that we make of steel or plastic today was made from wood then: buildings, wagons, furniture, and ships. Even by 1714, this reliance on wood would thin out England's forests considerably.

Next to wood, sheep provided wool for England's one major industry. Nearly every part of the country was engaged in sheep farming, but it was most important to hillier or more remote areas, like the West Country, the Westriding of Yorkshire, and East Anglia. By the way, throughout most of our course, sheep will outnumber people by about two to one.

Finally, I need to talk about climate. As you know, there's a sort of standing joke about English weather. To put it charitably, it's not supposed to be very good. Supposedly, it's dreary and rainy. In fact, I would argue that weather is very much a matter of perspective. If you come from Spain or Southern California, English weather is very disappointing. But if you're used to the weather patterns of Murmansk or Chicago, English weather, warmed by the Gulf Stream, is actually mild and pleasant.

In fact, that mildness—it's never very hot and it's never very cold, staying between about 40° and perhaps 80° Fahrenheit—combined with frequent, but not torrential, rainfall makes England terrific for certain kinds of crops, especially heavy grain like wheat or barley. That advantage is crucial, for on the weather depended the harvest and on the harvest depended everything else. Too much sun and the crops withered. Too much rain and they rotted. Too many crops and food prices fell and with them the income and purchasing power of farmers. Too few crops and food prices rose, possibly out of the range of multitudes of poor people. Too little food and those multitudes sickened or starved. I cannot overemphasize the degree to which



everything in England depended on the weather and was therefore outside of human control.

In this lecture, we've argued that geography is to a great extent destiny. It goes far to explain how each of the countries and regions of the British Isles developed politically, socially, and culturally. Some commentators have gone farther to argue that the climate of the British Isles has produced a certain kind of personality: quiet, studious, and not given to extremes of emotion. The following lectures will offer plenty of evidence against this stereotype: some study, precious little quiet, and bushels of emotion.

Having come to know their land, it is now time to meet the people of England in 1485.

## The Land and Its People in 1485—Part II

### Lecture 3

**Serfdom is a system by which workers were unable to leave the land. In exchange for a set amount of labor on their lord's demesne, as well as fees and military service, they received a house, strips of land to farm, and protection from the landlord. This system collapsed by 1400 as the remaining workers demanded wages for their labor and the freedom to leave—to look for higher wages.**

**T**he population of England and Wales was only about 2.2 million in 1485. This number had shrunk from possibly 6 million in the 1340s as a result of the Black Death (1348–1349) and recurring plague epidemics. The English people were also subject to additional epidemic diseases (smallpox, cholera, typhus, typhoid fever, sweating sickness, and whooping cough); bad harvests—perhaps one harvest in four was poor; one in six, so poor as to produce famine; accidents (fire, drowning); and violence (war, assault). Average life expectancy in England in 1485 was about 35 years. Old people were relatively rare. Infant mortality was high, perhaps 20 percent in the first year.

The resultant decline in population produced a labor shortage. This was good news for labor. Fewer workers meant the end of serfdom, higher wages, lower food prices, and lower rents. This was bad news for landowners and employers who paid those higher wages and depended on the yield from those lower food prices and rents. Still, the gulf between the haves and the have nots was wide.

Less than 10 percent of England's population lived in urban areas. They may be divided as follows:

- London was by far the largest city with, perhaps, 50,000 people. It was the center of trade, the main *entrepôt* for goods from Europe, and a crossroads east-west and north-south for England. It was the center of government: Westminster was home to the Palace

of Westminster, the principal royal residence, the Houses of Parliament, and the law courts.

- Provincial cities with populations of around 10,000 included Bristol, a western seaport; Norwich, a cloth town in East Anglia; and York, the most important city in the north.
- Cathedral, market, and county towns of several hundreds, which swelled in size during markets and fairs, included, for example Salisbury, Hampshire; Dorchester, Dorset; and Rye, Sussex.

All were highly dependent on the wool trade, England's one major industry. This would make them vulnerable when that trade stagnated in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. In any case, most people did not live in towns. They lived in the countryside on manors and in villages.

A manor was the estate of a great landlord. The lord's manor house was set apart from the village, often on a hill. The church was at the heart of the village, socially and culturally, if not actually physically. It was the only stone building in the village. It was the religious center of the village, where Sunday services were held, holidays (Holy Days) celebrated, and all the important rites of passage solemnized: birth (baptism), marriage (matrimony), and death (funeral). It had no competition: All were required to attend church, and Roman Catholicism was the only legal religion in England. It was the major source of news in the village. It was, therefore, the social center of the village, its churchyard the site of holiday feasting and church ales, Sunday and holiday sports, wedding receptions and wakes.

The houses where villagers lived were small and made of mud, straw, and similar materials (and easily destroyed). They had one or two rooms (shared with animals in winter) and a hearth in the center. Possessions might include a few pots and pans, a table and some stools, candles, and a few articles of clothing. People slept on rushes or mattresses stuffed with straw. The fields they rented from the landlord and worked were arranged in long strips for ease of plowing. People worked from sunup to sundown, which implied longer hours in summer.

In town, merchants acted as middle men, and craftsmen made and sold things. Residents of port cities worked in trades and crafts associated with the sea, while inn- and tavern-keepers provided necessary services. In the country, men went out to the fields, joined by women and children at peak times (planting, harvest). At other times, the women and children tended animals and spun or wove wool. These supplemental sources of income might be the difference between survival (economic, even physical) and poverty or death. When the harvest was good, the diet of the average peasant was fairly healthy, consisting of bread, pea soup, cheese, occasional meat, and ale.

Less than 10 percent of the population owned land. About half of it was owned by the top one-half of 1 percent of the population, the nobility and gentry. Yet, they had tremendous power over their tenants. The landlord could demand rents, military service, and deference (see Lecture 4). In return, the landlord was obligated to provide legal, military, and economic protection, as well as paternal care and hospitality, for example, Christmas feasts.

Did landowners protect their tenants? Did tenants respect their landowners? How did people resign themselves to such inequality? These are questions for the next lecture. ■

### Suggested Reading

Bucholz and Key, *Early Modern England*, introduction, sec. 4.

Davies, *Peace, Print and Protestantism*, chap. 1.

Guy, *Tudor England*, chap. 2.

Morrill, *Tudor and Stuart Britain*, chap. 1.

**Supplemental sources of income might be the difference between survival (economic, even physical) and poverty or death.**

## Questions to Consider

1. Why was the medieval Church so important in the lives of villagers in 1485? Do you suppose that it was equally important in the lives of townspeople?
2. Imagine a world in which the average person lived to just 35 years. How would this affect your philosophy of life, attitude toward religion, and relationships to friends and family members?

# The Land and Its People in 1485—Part II

## Lecture 3—Transcript

In the last lecture, we examined the physical landscape of the British Isles and how that landscape affected the political, social, economic, and cultural developments of its various peoples. This lecture continues the discussion of the physical world of the English people in 1485 by examining the material and social topography of the English town, manor, and village.

The first thing that we would note about the English people in 1485 is that there were far fewer of them than there are today. This means that if we were to make our fantastic field trip, it would take us a great deal of time before we actually ran into any of them. The population of England in 1485 was only about 2.2 million people (that includes Wales), as compared with perhaps 50 million today. In fact, this population had once been much larger: at least 4 million and possibly as many as 6 million people in 1300.

In 1348–1350, the Black Death, named for the black patches it left on the skin and almost certainly the bubonic plague, swept into England, carried on the saliva of fleas, which were themselves carried on the backs of black rats, which were themselves carried on carts and ships along trade routes from the Middle East.

The Black Death was intensely virulent. Once bitten, your odds of survival were about one in four. For most victims, a painful death ensued within days, sometimes hours. Of course, contemporaries had no understanding of either the pathology of the disease or its remedy.

The result was a demographic disaster. By 1400, the population of England had declined by half. That's worth pondering for a second. To lose half of your population: Imagine the devastation to individual families and lives over a period of 50 years.

The population continued to dwindle thereafter for about a century because of periodic recurrences of the Black Death. It kept coming back until 1665. The Great Plague of London was the last outbreak. There was also a host of additional bacterial and viral infections and exotic epidemic diseases like the

sweating sickness of 1555–1558, the bloody flux of 1472, and the French pox (possibly dysentery) of 1475.

Remember, late-medieval people had no understanding of the connections among hygiene, germs, and disease. The fact is we don't actually know what many of these diseases were. The "bloody flux": that description tells you nothing and in that nothing is testimony to the lack of knowledge of contemporary medical understanding of these diseases. These people had no recourse to modern antibiotics. As a result, this period has sometimes been called the golden age of bacteria.

These people were also subject to bad harvests. About one out of four harvests was bad. About one out of six was so bad that it brought famine on the land. I want to be careful here. Very few people, even in 1485, actually starved to death in the sense of not getting any food into their bodies. But of course, as the food supply dwindled, prices rose. People were unable to buy enough food to sustain themselves and that meant that resistance fell. As a result, people were prey to the bloody flux and all these other diseases.

Clothing and housing were barely adequate to keep one warm and dry. Most people had one flea-infested suit of woolen clothes, which by the way helps to explain the Black Death, and lived in flimsy huts made of mud and straw. We'll talk about those huts later in this lecture.

Accidents were common. Fires: Remember, we said that many of the buildings in England in 1485 are made out of wood, and they have thatched roofs. Nobody knows how to swim. Drowning was quite common. The most common way for a child to die in the Middle Ages was to fall into one of those rivers and drown. Violence was common, especially in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. We're going to talk in subsequent lectures about the amount of aristocratic violence, warfare, and assault that took place in this period.

As a result, the average life expectancy in England in 1485 was about 35 years. That means that many of my students would be entering into their maturity and I, of course, would just be a pleasant, if beloved, memory. Old people were far rarer in this society than they are today. Put another way, young people would have seemed to have been everywhere, except not

necessarily the same young people for very long. The young were not spared by these diseases. Infant mortality ran at about 20 percent in the first year. Another 10 percent would die by age 10.

This has led historians to postulate that people were obsessed with death in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. This is a period of time, as you know if you've done any art history, when the crucifixes are particularly tortured. Funerary monuments depict the decay of death, often on top of the sarcophagus.

Other historians have postulated that parents distanced themselves from their children until they reached a certain age and they knew they were going to survive. That's a very controversial idea, and we're going to tackle it in Lecture Twenty-Two. What is certain is that the population only began to grow again in the 1470s or 1480s, just as this course begins.

The demographic disaster of the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries had tremendous economic consequences. Ironically, the golden age of bacteria was also the golden age of labor. Few workers meant that the survivors could make demands. The first and biggest demand they made was an end to serfdom.

As you may remember from Western Civilization, serfdom is a system by which workers were unable to leave the land. In exchange for a set amount of labor on their lord's demesne, as well as fees and military service, they received a house, strips of land to farm, and protection from the landlord. This system collapsed by 1400 as the remaining workers demanded wages for their labor and the freedom to leave—to look for higher wages.

Wages did indeed double for laborers between 1385 and 1485; wages went from two pence a day to four pence a day. Nobody is getting terribly rich here. By the way, perhaps I should explain that wages doubling in a century may not seem to be very much, but you should understand that inflation was an almost unknown concept in the Middle Ages. Wages had been set a long time earlier.

Food prices also fell, as did rents. Rents in the Duchy of Lancaster fell by about one-third. It's a good time to be alive—if you're alive.



This was all, of course, bad news for landowners who had to pay those higher wages and who depended on the income from those lower food prices and rents. Increasingly, they abandoned “demean farming,” which is relying on the profits from selling crops grown on their land, in favor of just renting their land out to peasants who paid them money. They relied on that money to survive and to prosper. These rents became their chief source of profit.

Others abandoned arable farming entirely. Instead, they turned to sheep farming. This process is known as “enclosure” because it was thought to involve the demolition of villages and the putting up of fences so that the sheep could graze. Enclosure was very, very controversial in the Middle Ages. Thomas More would complain in *Utopia* that, “...the husbandmen (tenant farmers) be thrust out of their own, or else, either by coven and fraud, or by violent oppression they be put besides their land or by wrongs and injuries they be so wearied, that they be compelled to sell all: by one means therefore or by other, either by hook or crook they must needs depart away, poor, wretched souls, so that the sheep once so meek devoured the very people themselves.”

The idea was that whole villages were supposedly depopulated by the needs of the flock and the greed of their owners. Historians have studied this, and they’ve actually come to the conclusion that very few peasants were actually ever thrown off the land. The reason was there were so very few peasants to go around. It wasn’t enclosure that depopulated England; it was the Black Death that depopulated England.

In any case, neither statute law nor sermons from the pulpit nor Thomas More’s propaganda were ever going to be effective in stopping enclosure. Landlords were going to do what landlords were going to do.

Finally, some aristocrats saw economic advantage in plunder. The 15<sup>th</sup> century is a great age for aristocratic warfare. One reason, I figure, is they’re not making a whole lot of money out of their land. It might be attractive to attack your neighbor and take the movables. This is another reason why the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries are often seen as being violent and death-obsessed.

There weren't very many people in England. If we wanted to find them, where would we find them? Where did the few people left live? They didn't live in towns. Less than 10 percent of the population of England in 1485 lives in towns.

Urban England may be divided into three broad categories. At the top is London, by far the largest city with maybe 50,000 people. Contemporaries were very impressed with it:

London, thou art of towns a per se.  
Sovereign of cities, seemliest in sight,  
Of high renown, riches, and royalty;  
Of lords, barons, and many a goodly knight;  
Of most delectable, lusty ladies bright;  
Of famous prelates in habits clerical;  
Of merchants full of substance and might:  
London, thou art the flower of cities all.

(William Dunbar, in honor of the city of London, 1501.)

Of course, 50,000 people means that this “flower of cities all” was roughly the size of Carson City, Nevada, or Terre Haute, Indiana, and less than half the size of Peoria, Illinois. If in 1485 it was the center of English trade, the crossroads of internal trade (east-west, and north-south), and also the great *entrepôt* for European goods; if it was the center of government, housing the court at the Palace of Westminster, and Parliament, and the law courts, it was still pretty small potatoes compared to other European cities like Paris or Rome.

It could be argued that its political and cultural influence in England was not nearly as strong as you might expect it to be as the capital. This is a point about the relative disunity of England in 1485. You may remember, we talked about the rivalries in the last lecture between the Southeast, the North and the West. Certainly, England is more united than the Celtic lands, but that doesn't necessarily mean that you should think of London as being the center of a federal bureaucracy such as we enjoy today.

Below the level of London, there are provincial cities with populations of around 10,000 in 1485. There are three great provincial capitals—virtual capitals of their regions: Bristol, a western seaport on the Severn; Norwich, in the west; a cloth town in East Anglia; and York, the most important city in the north. All of these are important regional centers.

Below the level of the regional centers are what I'll call cathedral, county, and market towns. These might have several hundred people or might have a hundred people. Cathedral cities would include Salisbury in Hampshire, and Chester in Cheshire (Chester is also the county town of Cheshire). County towns would include Dorchester in Dorset, and Worcester in Worcestershire (Worcester is also a cathedral city). You'll see that these categories are fairly porous.

Finally, at the lowest level of this third category are market towns like Abington, Berkshire, Richmond in Yorkshire, and Rye in Sussex. These last are hardly towns at all, just a few streets that cross each other only a few hundred yards from open fields. They would double in size during a market, fair, or church holiday, maybe going from 200 to 400. They would also serve as centers of justices and, of course, marketplaces where farmers could bring their grain.

All were highly dependent on the wool trade, England's one major industry. This made the bigger ones vulnerable in the 15<sup>th</sup> century because the market for raw wool collapsed during this period of time. The Hundred Years' War with France and the Wars of the Roses increased demand for finished wool cloth, which the English weren't making yet. There was a period of time when some of these larger cities saw their trade suffer. Some towns made the transition and started finishing wool cloth—Salisbury and Exeter in Devon. Those that did not suffered in wealth and population: Chester, Gloucester, Lincoln, Winchester, and York. The decline of these towns contributed to a general sense of decline that we detect in the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

In any case, most people didn't live in towns. The vast majority of the English people lived in the countryside in villages of less than 500 inhabitants and maybe as few as 50. Let us imagine that in our quest to find the English people in 1485, we've trekked across river and forest looking for human

habitation. If we're in the under-populated North, the West Country, or East Anglia, we find it in isolated settlements—in forest clearings, on the sides of rugged uplands, surrounded by a few sheep—for in these areas, pastoral farming is just about the only major piece of economic sustenance.

Eventually, if we head south, we would begin to run into larger settlements. We might see the towers of a castle or a windmill, or more likely the square Norman steeple of a village church. Any of these would tell us that we had stumbled upon the estate of a great landlord known as a “manor.” The manor contained the lord's manor house—maybe. Not all manors contained manor houses because some lords have more than one manor and therefore might choose to live somewhere else.

If the manor house was part of the manor, it might be in the center of the village. More likely, it would be on a hill overlooking the village. The power of the landlord is evident even in his physical relationship—his architectural relationship—to you. The landlord might live in an impressive castle or a big timber frame house.

What every village would certainly have would be a church. This was virtually the only stone building in the village apart from the manor house and maybe the mill. It was the religious center of the village, where Sunday services were held and some 40 holidays a year were celebrated (holidays being, of course, church Holy Days). All the important rites of passage in your life took place in this church. Your birth was marked at baptism, your marriage in the sacrament of holy matrimony, and your death at your funeral.

This church has no competition. There's only one legal religion in England in 1485, what we would today call Roman Catholicism. Therefore, on Sundays, holidays, and these big rites of passage in your life, virtually the entire village turns up in this place. On Sundays, you come to witness the Latin Mass, performed behind an altar screen, and to hear a homily in English.

That homily is probably your only source of religious instruction and your only source of news. Remember, that most people are illiterate—maybe 95 percent—and there are no newspapers, television, radio, or Internet. This means that the only news you hear of the outside world is coming from a

priest who was almost certainly picked by your local landlord, because one of the rights the landlord has is the right of *advowson*—the right to pick the priest. He’s not going to tell anything that the landlord and the king don’t want you to know. The only alternative source of news might be a traveler from abroad (but how often is that going to happen in your village of 300?) or perhaps gossip.

After mass, there’s likely to be some socializing in the churchyard or on the village common. Here would be held holiday feasts and church ales, Sunday and holiday sports (like stool ball, which is a primitive form of soccer, and stick ball), wedding receptions, and wakes. In other words, the village church is not just the religious center of the village. It’s also the social center. In fact, that distinction that we might draw between our religious life and our social life is one that would have made no sense to people in the Middle Ages. They didn’t draw those distinctions.

Given the Catholic doctrine of purgatory (the belief that the souls of the dead are still in transition toward salvation, and that the living pray for them and help them in that transition), you can make a case that when you plop down for a church ale on your grandmother’s grave, the whole village is there, past and present, in a way that would not be true after the Reformation.

After the excitement of the day, we accompany the villagers the few feet down the village’s one dirt track to their homes. In 1485, these were likely to be small huts or shacks made of what historians call “wattle and daub.” That’s a very fancy way of saying anything that will stick together: straw, mud, animal manure—anything that will stick together. Needless to say, such houses are pretty flimsy. In fact, I would make the point that if you’ve been to Europe and England and you’ve entered any building that was medieval, almost certainly no poor person ever lived in it. Poor people’s dwellings didn’t survive. They didn’t survive the next heavy rain, let alone survive to our times.

This hut probably consists of one, or at most two, rooms. There’s a wooden door and few if no windows to let in the cold and the light. Our eyes take awhile to adjust to the darkness. One reason is the lack of windows. Another is the fact that there in the middle of the floor is a fire—the “hearth.” When I

say that word “hearth,” you undoubtedly conjure up lots of warm images of brick, maybe a kettle, roaring flame, and maybe an easy chair. What I want you to think of in 1485 is a campfire in the middle of your house. There’s a hole in the roof for the smoke, but not a lot of it escapes. This was the family’s only source of light and heat and its only implement for cooking.

When the harvests were good, the average peasant’s diet was fairly well-balanced, if not particularly mouth-watering: rough brown bread, pea soup, cheese, meat on rare occasions (when your animals died), and lots of ale. Drinking water is very dodgy. They don’t have a way to purify water. It’s much safer and healthier to drink ale, which can be brewed at home.

Looking around the room, we may espy a few possessions—pots, pans, a table, stools, a chest, a candleholder, and a few articles of clothing. People slept on rushes or mattresses stuffed with straw.

Admittedly, they spent most of their time working outdoors, but at night and in winter, this was where they spent most of their time, very much in each other’s company and lacking what we consider to be the most basic privacy. If the family was lucky, there would be a second room in which you kept your animals, because if there wasn’t, you’re keeping them in the house with you as well. That milk, cheese, wool provided by your sheep, and your cow or goat, is perhaps what will keep you alive during winter or provide a valuable supplemental income that will make it possible for you to survive. As late as the 19<sup>th</sup> century, if you know Thomas Hardy’s *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*, remember that the entire plot is set in motion when the horse owned by the D’Urbervilles family dies in an accident. They lose their animal. As late as the 19<sup>th</sup> century, to lose your animals is a life-threatening situation.

Finally, surrounding the village were the fields where the villagers worked, arranged in long strips. They were arranged in a haphazard pattern because that’s how the fields were cleared. The reason you have long strips is that you want to plow in one direction entirely. The reason you want to plow in one direction is that the standard beast of burden in 1485 is still the ox. I don’t myself have a lot of experience with oxen, but I can well understand

that you don't really want to try to turn one of these around very often. The ox wants to go, you want to follow.

What sort of work did people do? In town, people sold goods and services. Merchants acted as middlemen for grain, cattle, or wool. Craftsmen made and sold cloth, shoes, and barrels. Blacksmiths shod horses; millers ground grain. To be allowed to do that, they all had to belong to the local guild. They made their goods on spec, rather than keep a ready stock. You couldn't go to a shoemaker and say, "I'd like those 7½'s." Your foot was measured, and then the goods were made.

Craftsmen lived above their shops with their families and the apprentices who helped them work. One is very close to one's work in one's living arrangements.

Port cities contained crafts and trades associated with seafaring: shipwrights, carpenters, sail makers, dockworkers, and customs officials. Inn- and tavern-keepers provided accommodation for travelers. Every town has an inn or a tavern that can do this. This is a place to do business for merchants who might be local or transient. Inns provide post office services and an employment agency for newcomers. They provide food and drink, of course, for the locals, though I remind you that ale can be brewed at home, a fact that I verified during my graduate days at Oxford.

These venues are also often a setting for shadier activity, like fencing stolen goods and prostitution. It's no accident that when Falstaff plans whatever naughtiness he's going to accomplish, he always plans it in a tavern. Some of you will remember Christopher Marlowe's demise came in a tavern brawl. These establishments are often associated with that kind of violence.

In the countryside, in the rugged north, are fenland settlements in East Anglia. Most people made their livings, as I indicated, with pastoral farming, raising sheep or maybe dairy farming. They spun wool. They engaged in quarrying and, again as I indicated, poaching the king's deer.

If you lived on the coast, you survived by fishing and trade. Most villages in the Southeast depended upon arable farming—crop farming. Surrounding

the village would be a plot of common land to graze animals and also play sports, which, by the way, I think is a terrible combination—grazing animals and playing sports, if you stop and think about it.

Then there were the fields divided into their strips. Since estate managers in 1485 knew about soil exhaustion and crop rotation, these strips would be grouped, one for the fall crop (wheat), one for the spring crop (oats or barley), and one fallow. The big tasks of late-medieval farming were organized communally. Men went out to the fields where they hoed, plowed, sowed, pruned, and winnowed. At peak times, the whole village would come together. People would help each other, and women and children would go out to help. Everybody worked sunup to sundown in the fields, which implied longer hours in summer.

At other times, the women cooked, sowed clothes, fetched water, and spun or wove wool. These supplemental sources of income, particularly the spinning of wool, would be crucial to a family. As I indicated, they might be the margin of difference between economic survival and poverty. There's an old myth that before modern times, you didn't need two incomes in a family. That may have been true of America in the 1950s, but it certainly was not true of people in England in the 15<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>, and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. Women had to do work that brought in money if the family was going to survive.

Before we leave these people, it is worth remarking that this manor and village would be their entire world. In this period, there is less evidence of migration from place to place as we will find in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. Most people in the village will never see a city, they'll never touch an ocean, and they'll never pass beyond the borders of the shire.

Being such a small community, everyone will know everyone else and everyone will know everyone else's business. Peer pressure must have been immense and intense. Modern notions of privacy simply don't obtain. That made sense, because to survive, these people had to work together, and they had to know each other's business. If you're having lots and lots of children and your average life expectancy is only 35, there's a very good chance that the village will end up having to raise those children, so we pay attention.



Finally, above all, all would have been highly conscious of the fact that they were not masters of their own destinies. The landlord is that. Perhaps on a hill overlooking the village or perhaps in a manor house many miles away, the landlord sat in his manor house. He may have been a great nobleman and a prosperous squire and a minor gentleman. He might have owned many manors across the country or just this one. He might have lived on the estate or at a great distance.

What is certain is that he had tremendous power over his tenants. He owned nearly all the land in the neighborhood. He commanded a vast income from its crops, exploiting its mineral wealth. Above all, he collected rents from the tenants who lived and worked his land. In addition, the landlord likely owned the only oven where you could bake your bread and the only mill where you could grind your grain. He's going to charge you a fee to use those.

Control of the land implied control of the church as we've said, because of the right of *advowson* and because the church stands on land donated by the landlord himself. He could demand from his tenants not only rents, but military service in time of war and deference at all times—we'll talk about deference in the next lecture.

Often the king would ask him to use his power to maintain order in the countryside as sheriff, justice of the peace, and judge of his manor court. The court that has jurisdiction over your life is probably a court in which your landlord is the judge. Stop and think about the implications of that on, say, I don't know, a rent dispute. Disputes over lands, goods, or customary rights were solved in these manor courts by the landlord.

Paradoxically, his local importance might draw him to London to attend the King's Council in court, to sit in the House of Lords if he's a peer, or to sit in the House of Commons if he's elected by his fellow landlords in the neighborhood.

Fortunately, medieval theology argued that landlords who were entrusted with great power had a responsibility to protect their tenants. They were obligated to give them military protection and economic protection in hard

times. Nevertheless, it should be obvious that it is best to be a landlord in this society. Because of land, the landlord need do no work. Today, with our powerful work ethic and emphasis on productivity and leading by example, this strikes us as odd, but their argument is only the person who does no work should have the responsibility for governing, because only he can take the time to study.

In any case, if you remember one thing about this lecture, it should be that those landlords who own all of those villages across England own a part of the lives of all of those villagers. The second thing you should understand about them is that they form a very small proportion of the population. Less than one-half of 1 percent of the population of England formed the aristocracy and gentry who owned more than 50 percent of the land. A very tiny proportion of this society controls a vast amount of power, which leads us to a question, a question my students are always asking: Why would the other 99.5 percent put up with it? Why didn't they just rebel?

As we will find out in subsequent lectures, sometimes they did rebel, but more often they did not. When we come back in the next lecture, we'll study why they didn't, and in particular a medieval concept that taught everyone to remain in their place called the Great Chain of Being.

# The Land and Its People in 1485—Part III

## Lecture 4

**The physical world, spatial relationships, and material culture are a very important part of history. ... The land shapes the people and the people shape the land, but these things are less than half of the story. Sometimes they're downright misleading if you fail to understand how the people of a specific time and place constructed their world mentally—made sense of it in their heads. In short, you don't understand them if you don't understand their worldview.**

**W**hen late-medieval and early-modern men and women thought about the universe, they thought of the Ptolemaic universe, with the earth at the center. When they thought about the inhabitants of that universe, they thought of a hierarchy, known as the Great Chain of Being, which was arranged as follows:

- God (who dwelt everywhere);
- Angels (who traversed the heavens, between God and man);
- Man (who dwelt on the earth);
- Animals (earth);
- Plants (earth); and
- Stones (earth).

There are five crucial points to make about the chain that will resonate throughout this course: Those at the top of the chain are closest to God. Humankind is halfway down, between angels and beasts. Apart from God, each of the ranks in the chain could be further divided. Angels were divided into nine ranks: seraphim, cherubim, and so on. Similarly, the animal hierarchy was headed by the lion, king of the beasts; plants, by the mighty oak; and stones, by the regal diamond.

The king was at the top of the human chain (see the rest of this course). He owned about five percent of the land in England. The nobility came second; they consisted in 1485 of about 50 to 60 families with inheritable titles. The head of the family sat in the House of Lords. This rank owned about 5–10 percent of the land. The gentry came next. They consisted of about 3,000 knights, esquires, and plain gentlemen in 1485. The most prominent sat in the House of Commons. Altogether, they owned about 10–15 percent of the land. The yeomanry were substantial farmers. Husbandmen were small farmers, probably renters from a bigger landowner. Cottagers rented a cottage with no farm attached. Laborers had no home of their own. They lived and worked on someone else's farm. The poor had no permanent residence or visible means of support.

These ranks could be further subdivided. Thus, nobles were divided into dukes, marquesses, earls, viscounts, and barons; then further divided by the order in which one's title was created. Finally, every human rank might be divided into families, with the genders ranked, as follows: father, mother, male children (in birth order), and female children (in birth order). In theory, every single creature and object in God's universe could be placed, precisely, in this hierarchy. The head of each part of the chain was analogous to the head of the whole chain—God himself: the king in the country; the father in the family; and the lion among beasts. All represented God, were placed at the top of their respective chains by God, wielded God's power, and were to be obeyed as God himself.

The chain was a chain, not a ladder, and was considered to be God's plan. Because everyone was placed in the chain by God, it was a grave sin to attack the chain, disobey your superiors, or try to rise to another rank. In short, this was a society that valued order, not opportunity; conformity, not originality; community, not individuality.

When we consider that the top three ranks of the human chain represented only about one-half of one percent of the population, yet owned perhaps 20 to 30 percent of the land in England and nearly 100 percent of the power, we might well ask why the other 99.5 percent of the people put up with this situation? First, because they were educated to put up with it. The Great Chain of Being was taught from the pulpit every Sunday. Remember that

everyone was required to attend the parish church. There were no competing religions. The local landlord appointed the pastor (the right of *advowson*). Contemporaries were taught to believe that the inequalities of the chain were mitigated by the related concepts of paternalism and deference.

Paternalism was the belief that the elite had a responsibility to look after the lower orders by providing military and legal protection, jobs and economic assistance in hard times, and hospitality at holidays. In return, their tenants, the common people, were supposed to provide deference, that is, obedience and respect. They did this by attending church on Sunday, paying their taxes and tithes, obeying their landlords, bowing, curtseying, tipping their caps, “giving the wall,” dressing modestly according to their rank, and so on.

Did this ideal work in practice? The chain represented order and stability, but life changes constantly. As our course opens in 1485, the ideal of the Great Chain of Being fit less and less well with the realities of English life.

First, the composition of the various ranks did change: Some noble families were upstarts. Others died out or were deprived of their titles on charges of treason and acts of attainder (see Lectures 5–7). The definition of a “gentleman” was increasingly imprecise. Was it based on a coat of arms? (Not every gentle family bothered.) Birth? (Pedigrees could be faked. What of old families who lost their wealth? What of rising men who purchased land recently?) Wealth? (Did this make merchants and lawyers gentle?) Land? (But some gentlemen opted not to buy land.) Education and learning? (Gentlemen increasingly had them, but many gentlemen had little.) Increasingly, a gentleman was anyone who could get away with calling himself a gentleman.

Below these ranks, yeomen, husbandmen, and others rose and fell with fluctuations in the economy, fluctuations in the weather (bad harvests), and fluctuations in the seasons (laborers thrown out of agricultural work annually). Some people fell out of the chain entirely. That is, they didn’t live

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**As our course opens in 1485, the ideal of the Great Chain of Being fit less and less well with the realities of English life.**

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on the land under the paternal care of a landlord but formed chains of their own that did not seem to fit into the main social hierarchy.

Cities had their own social chains that competed with the main chain. The city chain consisted of the mayor; aldermen or town council; citizens or freemen (that is, members of the guild); journeymen, apprentices, and so on; and everybody else. Cities were places of relative anonymity: It was harder to tell who was who, who belonged to whom in a city. It was possible to escape your rank in the main chain by going to the city. Cities were places where people could grow rich or poor quickly and, thus, rise or fall in status. This economic and social fluidity made nonsense of the chain. Finally, the city raised problems of definition: Where did a rich merchant fit among nobles, gentry, and others?

The Church had its own chain consisting of the pope, archbishops, bishops, priests, sisters, and the laity. Regarded by all good Catholics as the Vicar of Christ, how did the pope's power stack up against the king's? What if these two leaders did not agree? During the Middle Ages, popes and kings of England had clashed over such matters as the appointment of bishops, the jurisdiction of Church and royal courts, and taxation. During the Middle Ages, a growing chorus had criticized both the doctrine and practice of the Church. Such groups as the Lollards attacked the clergy for being too worldly, too concerned with power, and too remote from the faithful. The Church regarded such groups as heretical. It enforced discipline, with the cooperation of the king, by burning heretics at the stake. But there remained a small minority of Christians who wanted a more democratic, less hierarchical Church. What would happen if the king ever agreed with them?

The Great Chain had endowed the nobility with great power over its land, its wealth, and its tenants. For a century before this course begins, the nobility of England had used that power to fight one another and, often, the king. That is, as this course begins, England had just experienced a century-long nightmare for the Great Chain of Being: a series of rebellions, usurpations, and civil wars, culminating in the Wars of the Roses. ■

## Suggested Reading

Bucholz and Key, *Early Modern England*, introduction, sec. 5.

Tillyard, *The Elizabethan World Picture*.

## Questions to Consider

1. Why do you suppose most people put up with the inequalities of the Great Chain of Being? Why were they more afraid of disorder than stagnation? Why did they choose the *status quo* over opportunity?
2. Imagine migrating from the placid life of the village to the hustle and bustle of town. What might contemporaries have found attractive about town life? What might have alarmed them?

## The Land and Its People in 1485—Part III

### Lecture 4—Transcript

In the last lecture, we examined the physical and social topography of English life around 1485. The physical world, spatial relationships, and material culture are a very important part of history. After all, it was I who said the land shapes the people and the people shape the land, but these things are less than half of the story. Sometimes they're downright misleading if you fail to understand how the people of a specific time and place constructed their world mentally—made sense of it in their heads. In short, you don't understand them if you don't understand their worldview.

One of my frustrations with the way history is done by Hollywood is that a producer or director will often brag about getting the costumes exactly right and the muskets exactly the way they were in 1776, or about the battleship he built on the back lot accurate down to the last rivet. He or she will then fill his or her characters' minds with thoughts they would never have thought and their mouths with words they would never have said, because nobody took the time to try to figure out the mental world that these people were inhabiting.

If I may offer a particular example, I think one of the worst offenders in this regard is an otherwise wonderful series that you may have seen, "1900 House," "1940 House," and "1880 House." This franchise spends a great deal of time getting every last physical detail right, down to the exact washing powder that would have been used in May 1900. But they spend no time trying to explain to their subjects why people in 1900 thought it was important to use this particular kind of washing powder, or why they wore these particular clothes, or why they engaged in these now seemingly insane customs. It's just as important to understand that mental world as it is to understand the physical world.

This lecture will address the mental landscape of the English people. That is, it will lay out a late-medieval ideal called the Great Chain of Being, and the social hierarchy that it implied. It will then explain why that ideal of society was under strain as this course opens in 1485. That will require us



to discuss England's economic base, its religious structure, and its political arrangements at the end of the Middle Ages.

In 1485, virtually all men and women in England were what we would today call Roman Catholic. That is, the Reformation hadn't occurred yet. Jews had been expelled from England in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. There were occasional traders from Muslim countries, Jewish traders, and Orthodox traders who undoubtedly visited and set up small communities, but they didn't stay and they didn't leave much impact upon English culture. Therefore, all English men, women, and children were taught, and so far as we know believed, that God created the universe, ordered it, and was active in its everyday working.

When asked to describe their universe or its parts, late-medieval commentators fell back on metaphors. One of their favorite metaphors was that of the "body politic"—that is, they thought of the English polity as a body, with the king at the head, the aristocracy (who bore arms) as the arms and the shoulders, and of course, you know who's going to be the legs and the feet, don't you? It's going to be all those people at the bottom of the social hierarchy, the 99.5 percent that we talked about in the last lecture.

A far more comprehensive metaphor, because it includes God and the physical universe, is one that later historians have called the Great Chain of Being. The Great Chain of Being is going to be at the heart of a great deal of discussion in this course, so we're going to spend the rest of today's lecture on it. When late-medieval and early-modern men and women thought about their universe, they thought about the Ptolemaic universe. That is, they thought about a series of concentric spheres, which included the stars, planets, sun, moon, and, at the center, earth. At the center of earth were the flames of hell.

As this implies, when they thought about the inhabitants of that universe, they thought of a hierarchy arranged as follows: God, who dwelt everywhere, but especially beyond the stars; angels, who traversed the heavens between God and man on earth; man (and I will use the politically incorrect term, because that's how they thought of it), who dwelt upon the earth erect; animals, who dwell on the earth, but closer to it, or at least most of them (remember this is England and most animals are not actually taller than people in England);

plants (there are tall trees, but think of shrubs and bushes: They too dwell closer to the earth); and, of course, stones—which live literally on the earth or indeed are the earth.

There are five things that I want you to remember about this system. First, that those at the top are closest to God. Second, that humans are halfway down the chain. Third, that the system is further divided—each rank can be further divided. Fourth, the top rank in the chain wields God’s power. Fifth, that this is a chain and not a ladder.

First, those at the top are closest to God physically. Thus, church steeples aspire to heaven. The one at St. Paul’s cathedral, before it was burnt down, was almost 500 feet high. Thus, the souls of the damned dwell at the center of the earth in the molten core of hell, as far removed from God’s love as possible.

The second point I want you to remember is that humankind is halfway down the chain. Since medieval theologians thought that the participants in the chain participated in some of the characteristics of those above them and some below them, that means that we as human beings are half angel, half animal—half spiritual beings and half physical, corporeal (what we would today call hormonal) beings. Contemporaries were very aware of the fact that we stand in between and that we can go up or we can go down. As Francis Bacon said, “A man’s nature runs either to herbs or weeds, therefore let him seasonably water the one and destroy the other.”

The third thing that I want you to remember about the chain, and the one that I’ll spend the most time dwelling upon, is that apart from God, each of the ranks in the chain could be further divided. Thus, medieval theologians didn’t just think of angels. Anyone who’s ever read their Dante or grew up in the old Roman Catholic Church knows that there were seraphim, cherubim, thrones, dominations, virtues, powers, principalities, archangels, and angels.

The animal hierarchy may be similarly divided. Was not the lion the king of the beasts? Is not the eagle nobler than the sparrow? Is not the whale greater than the codfish? Plants too could be ranked from the mighty oak down to the lowly fern. As far as rocks are concerned, we all know that diamonds are a girl’s best friend.

And so with man. Human beings were ranked as follows: at the top, the king, followed by the nobility, followed by the gentry, followed by yeoman farmers, followed by husbandmen (smaller farmers), followed by cottagers (who don't have any land of their own), followed by laborers and, at the very bottom, the poor.

I'd like to take some time to examine each of these ranks in detail, because we're going to be referring to them all through this 48-lecture course. First, the king was the fount of justice and honor—"God's lieutenant on earth." We're going to be talking a lot about the king in this course, so I'm going to skip over him now. For now, what we need to remember is that not only is he the most prominent and powerful person in England, but he's also the wealthiest, owning perhaps 5 percent of its land.

Following him are the nobility, about 50–60 families with inheritable titles in 1485. Because they started out as the king's military retainers, only males could inherit title, lands, etc. The male head of the family sits in the House of Lords. This rank owns maybe 5–10 percent of the land in England. Because they want to preserve as much of their holdings as possible, they engage in the practice of *prima genitor*—only the eldest son inherits land.

Their income ranges from maybe £3,500 a year for the Duke of York down to maybe £60 for poor old Lord Clinton. Their great wealth in the country implies vast retinues called "affinities," which include huge numbers of servants, estate managers, chaplains, household servants, tenants, political allies and clients, hangers-on, many of whom are housed in the nobleman's castle. These castles form small mini-courts all throughout the nation. Theoretically, they're in the service of the king, but in reality, as we're going to learn, very often they stand out as fortresses against him.

Below the level of the nobility are the gentry, about 3,000 people in 1485. They often formed the ranks of these aristocratic retinues. You can further divide the gentry into knights, who bear the title "Sir," and esquires, the lowest rank allowed to bear arms, and below them, just plain gentlemen, signified by the word "gent" after your name. The most prominent sit in the House of Commons. Altogether, they own about 10–15 percent of the land in England. The greatest gentlemen have multiple estates, as do all nobles.

The least might have one small manor yielding maybe £20–40 a year. The greatest make maybe £100 a year. This income provides a comfortable existence and maybe a dozen servants. This rank oversaw the day-to-day local government for the king. They might serve as sheriffs, JPs (justices of the peace), local justices, or commissioners of array, whose job is to raise the militia.

Below them come the yeomen, substantial farmers. A yeoman might have several farms or just one. One thing about a yeoman that distinguishes him from a gentleman is that although he employs servants, he will work his land. He'll go out and actually do some farm labor. Yeomen make anywhere from £2–40 a year. By law, that £2 qualifies yeomen to vote for members of the House of Commons. Only people who own property can do that, but £2 makes for a fairly wide franchise. Yeomen are the backbone of rural society, serving on juries and in the militia.

Below them were the husbandmen, small farmers who were probably renters from a big landlord. They employ a few servants on a seasonal basis. They make about £10 a year. Below them are cottagers, who only rent a house. They have no land attached. They perform labor on some landlord's land. Below them are laborers who do not even have a house and who might live in the barn or in some husbandman's house as a servant. Below laborers are the poor, who have no permanent residence or visible means of support.

Note that these ranks can be further subdivided. When you talk about nobles, you don't just talk about nobles. Nobles can be divided into dukes, marquesses, earls (the English equivalent of the European count). Below them are viscounts ("vice counts") and plain old barons. Nor are we done. If you happen to be the Duke of Marlborough and your title was created after the Duke of Shrewsbury's, then you do not rank in precedence above him. You line up in front of him in a royal procession, because the king comes at the back. Whoever has the oldest precedence comes closest to the king.

Precedence was an obsession for the English ruling class. As late as 1904, Burke's Peerage still published a table of relative precedence for the top 20,000 people in England. You could find your rank. If you were at 19,999, that was better than being at 20,000.

Finally, of course every group of human beings, according to the Great Chain of Being, can be divided into families ranked as follows: the father, mother, male children in birth order, female children in birth order. Clearly, the chain implied a hierarchy of genders as well as social rank. Biologically, women were considered to be inferior to men. Theologians followed Aristotle in this, who wrote that, “The female is a misbegotten male.” Theologically, an awful lot of scripture was deployed in order to justify that argument of subservience.

Legally, a woman’s economic and social status is entirely dependent upon the man to whom she’s attached. As a daughter, if her father is a gentleman, she’s a gentlewoman, and then her status changes when she marries. This means that single women and widows were an anomaly in this society. This society doesn’t know what to do with them because they’re not attached to a man. That, within the context of the Great Chain of Being, is very dangerous. Clearly, at least in theory, this society wants to put everyone in their box.

The fourth thing I want you to remember about the chain is that the top of each part of the chain is analogous to God, the head of the whole chain. That is, the king in the country, the father in the family, the lion among beasts, and, you’d better believe it, the professor in the classroom wield God’s power and represent God on earth to all of the little underlings sitting in the seats. They were to be obeyed as God himself.

Clearly, the people of England really liked putting people and things in boxes. Their fondest desire was apparently to be able to place every single creature, being, or object in the universe in its proper place.

The fifth thing I want you to remember is that their greatest fear was not being able to do that. Their greatest fear was disorder. That is, the chain is a chain; it is not a ladder. This is the hardest thing, I think, for us smug moderns to comprehend, especially in my college classrooms, which are filled with students who are interested in rising above their parents. That’s one of the reasons they’re there. Remember that according to the Great Chain of Being, God created the chain. He made you a peasant. It is a sin to attack your superior in the chain, rebel against the king, hit your father, sass your professor, or even to want to rise to another rank.

Indeed, for any creature to attack its superior or attempt to change its rank in the chain was tantamount to Lucifer's rebellion against God himself. To do so was to upset the delicate balance of the universe as explained in a famous speech from Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*:

The heavens themselves, the planets, and this centre, [earth, in the Ptolemaic universe]  
Observe degree, priority, and place,  
Insisture, course, proportion, season, form,  
Office, and custom, in all line of order;  
... but when the planets  
In evil mixture to disorder wander,  
What plagues and what portents! what mutiny!  
What raging of the sea! shaking of earth!  
Commotion in the winds! Frights, changes, horrors,  
Divert and crack, rend and deracinate,  
The unity and married calm of states  
Quite from their fixture! O, when degree is shak'd,  
Which is the ladder to all high designs,  
The enterprise is sick! How could communities,  
Degrees in schools, and brotherhoods in cities,  
Peaceful commerce from dividable shores,  
The primogenitive and due of birth,  
Prerogative of age, crowns, sceptres, laurels,  
But by degree, stand in authentic place?  
Take but degree away, untune that string,  
And, hark, what discord follows!

What discord? Take the example of the murder of King Duncan from *Macbeth*:

And Duncan's horses—a thing most strange and certain—  
Beauteous and swift, the minions of their race,  
Turn'd wild in nature, broke their stalls, flung out,  
... make  
War with mankind.  
'Tis said they eat each other.

All this from abandoning order. All this from violating the Great Chain of Being. Clearly, English society in 1485 valued order, not opportunity; conformity, not originality; and community, not individuality.

When we consider that the top three ranks of the human chain represented only about 0.5 percent of the population, yet they own 20–30 percent of the land in England and nearly 100 percent of the power, we might very well ask why do the other 99.5 percent put up with it? Why didn't they rebel?

I'll offer two reasons. One was education. This is what they heard from the pulpits all the time. There were no competing religions, and the local landlord appointed the pastor. This is all you ever heard. They had this system drummed into them as I suppose our system of competition and constantly trying to rise has been drummed into us. That's why this seems foreign to us.

A second reason is a series of related concepts called “paternalism” and “deference.” This was another reason that people were willing to go along with this. Remember, we mentioned that noblemen were taught from birth—indeed, anyone with this kind of power—that they had a responsibility to those below them. Paternalism was the belief taught from the pulpits and in every royal proclamation. Those who were higher in the chain had a responsibility to look after those who were below.

After all, if the father was like God, God was also a loving father. If those at the top of the chain represented—and in some sense embodied—him, wielding his power, they also bore his responsibility for his creation and his creatures. Like God, those at the top of the chain were to watch paternally over their flocks, by providing military protection in time of war, justice in the royal and manor courts, and jobs and economic assistance in hard times. They were to offer hospitality as well at holidays. The landlord's house was supposed to be open at Christmas to all who wished to come and partake of that hospitality.

In return, the common people below them were supposed to provide deference. By deference, we mean allegiance, obedience, respect, attending church on Sunday, paying their tithes and taxes, obeying God's law (the

Ten Commandments), the king's law, and the church and canon law, and obeying the orders of their landlords, employers, or fathers. One also showed deference in all sorts of little ways, like bowing, curtsying, tipping one's hat, "giving the wall," and dressing modestly.

"Giving the wall" is probably the one you're wondering about: What does that mean? I will illustrate. Imagine that we're walking down the street and here comes the Duke of Richmond. I don't know why the Duke of Richmond is walking actually. He should be on horseback or later on in the period in a coach, but there he is. He's walking down the pavement. As I see him, as a social inferior, it is my job to "give him the wall." That is to say, it is my job to step down into the street.

Stop and think about that. Remember, that in this day and age, there are no underground sewers. The common street is also the common sewer. This is where all the muck—the night soil—from human beings and animals gathers. Could there be a more eloquent demonstration that England is a hierarchical society than that social inferiors have to step into that muck to show their deference to their superiors?

In the English universe of 1485, God is in his heaven, the king sits on the throne, the landlord holds sway in his manor house, fathers of all ranks are universally respected and obeyed, and university professors are treated with a dignity and esteem sadly lacking in this, our day and age. Everyone else steps into the muck at their behest. Every man, woman, and child knew where they stood and stand they would, cap in hand, in the presence of a social superior.

Or did they? It always strikes historians when they look at the Great Chain of Being and explain it, that people who wrote about it at the time always seemed stressed. They always seemed to feel that the chain was under attack. Of course it was. It was under attack by life. The chain is an ideal and life is never perfectly ideal, stable, or neat. As this course opens, the ideal of the chain fit less and less well with the realities of English life in a whole variety of ways.



Take social mobility. The composition of the various ranks did change. Take the nobility, supposedly made of the oldest, most distinguished families in the realm, but in fact, those families were changing all the time. Sometimes they died out. Very often, the monarchy would elevate new families. Often times, families would be thrown out when they committed some act of treason or attainder.

I should explain, by the way, what “attainder” is. An attainder is when the House of Lords votes that you are guilty of treason without actually having to go through the trouble of a trial. The idea behind attainder was that we decide we don’t like you and we will deprive you of your title, your lands, your goods, and your life. This means we’ve not only ruined you, but your entire family.

There was social mobility among the gentry and a lot of questioning about what actually makes a gentleman. Was it birth? There were new gentlemen all the time. Was it the ownership of land? Not all gentlemen owned land. Was it the fact that they did no work? What do you do about gentlemen who actually do serve in government positions? There was always a question with them.

Of course, further down among the lower ranks of the chain, there was always the possibility that a famine, bad harvest, or disease might throw whole families from the yanks of the yeomen into husbandmen, into cottagers, into the poor. In other words, the point I’m trying to make is that the social ranks of England were by no means frozen in time. They were constantly moving.

There were also competing chains. What are we going to do with cities? Cities have their own hierarchy. At the top, the mayor, followed by the aldermen and the city councilmen. They were followed by members of the guilds, freemen, or journeymen—who were followed by common citizens, apprentices, and everybody else. It’s difficult to fit these people into the Great Chain of Being. What do we do with the mayor of Bristol? Is he as important as a nobleman? Does he deserve to belong in the chain with gentlemen who do no work? Surely, he’s better than a yeoman.

In fact, what do you do with all of those merchants who are constantly rising and falling in wealth? That's wrong. That's not what the chain is about. They should be trying to make the exact same amount of money every year. We all know that that's not what happens in capitalism. That's not what happens in cities. Cities are places where capitalism flourishes and that is very difficult for the Great Chain of Being. Both play havoc with the notion that God created these immutable categories.

Then there's also the fact that cities are anonymous places. They're places where you can go and sort of abandon your status. Anyone who's ever moved to a city knows this. You become a new person. You can reinvent yourself. Nobody knows you from the village. Remember, the village was a place where everybody knew everybody else and was in your business. That doesn't happen in the city. Here's another way in which cities are corrosive of the Great Chain of Being.

The Church, too, is a problem for the Great Chain of Being. You wouldn't think so, because the Church invented the Great Chain of Being, but remember, there's a separate Church hierarchy: the pope, archbishops, bishops, priests, sisters, and the laity. Where does that hierarchy fit in? Most particular, where does the pope fit? The king is "God's lieutenant on earth" and the pope is the Vicar of Christ. Well, who's higher?

During the Middle Ages, as you know, English kings and popes occasionally did clash over who could appoint the bishop or whether people who committed crimes who were clergymen would be tried in civil courts (the king's courts). Popes had won a number of concessions in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, but in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, their prestige took a big hit. In 1309, the king of France more or less abducts the pope and takes him to Avignon, where he resides during what's sometimes called the Babylonian Captivity, until 1374.

In that year, the Italian bishops decided, "Enough of this," and they elected their own pope. This meant there were two popes. This situation, called the "Great Schism," lasted from 1374–1417. At one point, there were actually three popes. This did nothing for the prestige of the papacy.

Nor did it do anything for the King of England's respect for the papacy. He tended to view the Avignon papacy as a tool of the King of France, and he tended to view the papacy during the Great Schism as the tool of whatever group had elected that particular pope. English kings began to assert a certain amount of independence. In 1353, the first "Statute of Praemunire" was passed, which argued that English subjects had no right to take cases beyond royal jurisdictions to a papal court. This statute also blocked bills of excommunication from coming to England.

Also in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, there were "Statutes of Provisors," which limited the ability of the pope to appoint to English livings. No wonder that Martin V said, "It is not the pope but the King of England who governs the Church in his dominions."

The Great Schism healed, and royal papal relationships did improve, but that fundamental question was always there. Between a king and a pope, if they should disagree, who wins? Which of these two wielders of God's power should the people follow? It's always a question.

Then there was the fact that the European Church was experiencing a certain amount of corruption and criticism in the late Middle Ages. There were groups that the Church regarded as heretical, that wanted to purify the Church and wanted it to be less corrupt and worldly and more responsive to the faithful—more scriptural.

The English king regarded these as heresies as well. In 1414, he passes the statute for the burning of heretics. He's perfectly happy to burn heretics because he figures if they can question the pope, the next person they're going to question is the king. Once again, papal and royal power before 1485 are pretty much in line with each other. They're pretty much in cahoots with each other.

That question still remains: What would happen if an English king ever decided to support a heresy? What would happen if the English king, "God's lieutenant on earth," ever decided that his subjects should follow him and not the pope? The potential for an explosive situation is always there and, as you have probably figured out, will be reached in this course.

Finally, there's the feudal problem. The Great Chain of Being endowed the nobility of England with a great deal of power. They have these vast affinities and landed estates. Sometimes they used those affinities in support of royal power, sometimes they used those affinities to attack each other, and sometimes they are tempted to use those affinities to attack the king himself.

As this course opens in 1485, the English people have just experienced the worst possible nightmare that the Great Chain of Being can imagine: a series of rebellions, revolutions, and civil wars in which the very identity of who the rightful king was was very much up for grabs.

In the next lecture, we will begin to confront the experience of England in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. We will begin to examine the seeds of what would eventually become the Wars of the Roses.

# Medieval Prelude: 1377–1455

## Lecture 5

**In fact, as we shall see, Henry VII and his family would rule England for a century and a quarter. Henry himself would die in his bed, safe in the knowledge that his son, also named Henry, would succeed to a united, loyal, and generally peaceful realm. ... In the meantime, we have to examine the century of violence and disorder that produced Henry Tudor, Earl of Richmond, in order to understand the challenges he faced, the magnitude of his achievement.**

**T**o understand the challenges faced by the first Tudor, Henry VII, one has to understand the troubled experience of the English people during the century before his victory over Richard III at Bosworth Field in 1485. The seeds for England's troubles in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, culminating in the Wars of the Roses, were sown during the reign of Edward III. Edward III (1326–1377) was popular and successful because he fit the medieval model of a warrior-king. However, he left three problems for his successors.

- He became popular with the barons by conceding them increased power, at the expense of that of the Crown. This would make it easier for the barons to rebel against a future weaker king.
- He initiated a long-term conflict with France, the Hundred Years' War (1337–1453). In the short run, this increased Edward's popularity with the nobles (who added to their lands and plunder) and added to English territory in France. But in the long run, it would drain the royal treasury, wreck trade, and embitter the French.
- Edward had five surviving sons. This would confuse the succession.

Because he outlived his eldest son, Edward, the Black Prince, he was succeeded in 1377 by his grandson, Richard II (1377–1399). Richard was not popular and successful, in part because he was a pacifist and an aesthete who preferred artistic pursuits to leading his barons in battle. He was also an absolutist who wanted to reduce the power of Parliament and the barons

(many of whom were relatives). He alienated individual barons who crossed him by confiscating their land, stripping them of their titles, executing some, and banishing others. Eventually, he offended most of the ruling elite of the nation.

In 1399, the exiled Henry Bolingbroke, Duke of Lancaster, a grandson of Edward III (and Richard's cousin), returned and raised a rebellion that toppled Richard II. Henry's lands had been confiscated by Richard. This made him an object of baronial sympathy. Important northern barons, especially the Percies, Earls of Northumberland, and the Nevills, Earls of Westmorland, joined Henry's cause. As Richard's support melted away, Henry seized the throne, became Henry IV, and so founded the House of Lancaster.

The House of Lancaster (1399–1461) faced a problem of legitimacy throughout its reign. It had come to power by attacking and deposing the rightful King, Richard II, in direct violation of the Great Chain of Being. The repercussions of this act would reverberate for more than a century. The Lancastrians would always have to prove that they were the “real” line and would have trouble calling on the Great Chain to justify themselves.

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**The Lancastrians would always have to prove that they were the “real” line and would have trouble calling on the Great Chain to justify themselves.**

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Henry IV (1399–1413) was an intelligent and courageous leader, but he was hampered by his dubious ascent to the throne. This led to baronial resentment, that is, the feeling that Henry “owed” his noble supporters; baronial rebellions, especially in 1400–1408, when the regime was attacked by Owen Glendower in Wales and the Percies and Mortimers in the north; and Parliamentary criticism of his court and his failure to renew the war with France.

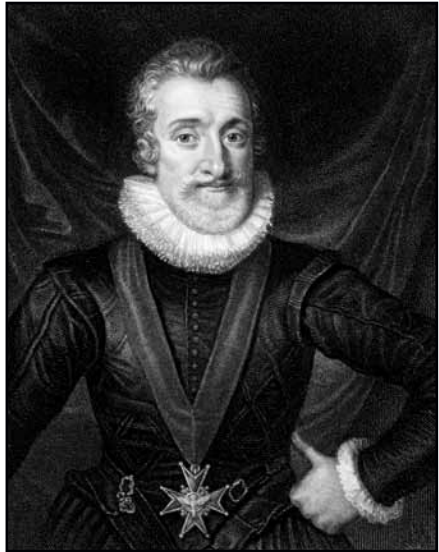
Henry V (1413–1422) sought to solve the problem of legitimacy by distracting the nobility with a renewal of the Hundred Years' War against France. This succeeded for a while, resulting in the conquest of most of France following the battle of Agincourt in 1415, which in turn led to

Henry's marriage to a French princess and claim of the French throne by the Treaty of Troyes in 1420. Unfortunately, Henry died while campaigning to stamp out French resistance in 1422. The problem of defending his new Anglo-French empire was inherited by his infant son of nine months, Henry VI.

Henry VI (1422–1461) was dominated by his family as a boy-king and, later, as an adult. He was pious and gentle but mentally impaired and certainly incapable of providing strong leadership. The real power at court was to be found in the king's family and favorites (the Beauforts). They tended

to line their own pockets at the taxpayer's expense. The lack of leadership, governmental corruption, and declining royal finances, combined with revived French nationalism, led to the loss of England's French lands (and, thus, the Hundred Years' War) by 1453.

Defeat in France, combined with these other problems, led to a decline in the popularity of the Lancastrian regime and the prestige of the monarchy. The barons felt increasing restlessness, in particular, those associated with Richard, Duke of York. Richard was the greatest noble landowner in England and another descendant of Edward III. Having been frozen out of power at court, he gradually rallied an opposition to Lancastrian mismanagement and, by 1455, to Lancastrian rule. In 1455, the affinities (private armies) of Edmund Beaufort, Duke of Somerset, and Richard, Duke of York, fought a battle at St. Albans, Hertfordshire. The Wars of the Roses had begun. ■



**Pious and gentle but mentally impaired, Henry IV was dominated by his family.**

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## Suggested Reading

Bucholz and Key, *Early Modern England*, chap. 1, sec. 1.

Davies, *Peace, Print and Protestantism*, chaps. 2–3.

## Questions to Consider

1. Who in this lecture can be accused of violating the Great Chain of Being (including its corollaries, paternalism and deference)? Why, given the presumed influence of the chain, did they do so? What were the ramifications of doing so?
2. What was the purpose of war in the late-medieval period? How did success or failure in war affect a leader's stature and the state's health?



## Medieval Prelude: 1377–1455

### Lecture 5—Transcript

In the last lecture, we saw how English men and women in 1485 clung to an ideal of hierarchy and stability called the Great Chain of Being. We also saw that life in 1485 was often less ordered and stable than was consistent with that ideal.

Nowhere was this more true in 1485 than in politics. Beginning a century earlier, at the end of the reign of Edward III, this lecture will begin to explain why the English monarchy and constitution underwent more than 100 years of instability prior to the accession of the Tudors. Topics covered will include the reign of Richard II, the usurpation of Henry Bolingbroke, the reigns of the Lancastrian kings, and the outbreak of the Wars of the Roses in 1455.

On August 22, 1485, a royal army under King Richard III was defeated by a force led by Henry Tudor, Earl of Richmond, at the battle of Bosworth Field in Leicestershire. As any student of Shakespeare's knows, Richard was killed. According to legend, his crown rolled under a hawthorn bush and was picked up and offered to his opponent, who wasted no time in proclaiming himself Henry VII, founding the Tudor line of kings and queens, ending a century of political instability that had culminated in the Wars of the Roses, bringing peace and prosperity to England and, unbeknownst to him, starting us off on this course.

Of course, Shakespeare wrote a century after these events. As depicted in his play, *The History of King Richard III*, or Olivier's film of the same name, the whole thing has an air of inevitability about it. Henry is depicted as the golden-haired boy. Remember, that Shakespeare was writing under Henry VII's granddaughter. He was no fool. He knew that he had to flatter the Tudors. History is—after all—written by the victors, and hindsight is 20-20.

In fact, no one living in 1485, least of all Henry, could have been so sanguine about his family's prospects. After all, his would be the fourth royal house to rule in England in the last 100 years. Each had claimed an increasingly disputed succession. Each had fallen when its head had either been murdered or been killed in battle. Each had surviving members living in 1485 with

their own claims to make on Henry's crown, and history indicated that each would find supporters among the English nobility. So why should anyone bet on Harry Tudor?

In fact, as we shall see, Henry VII and his family would rule England for a century and a quarter. Henry himself would die in his bed, safe in the knowledge that his son, also named Henry, would succeed to a united, loyal, and generally peaceful realm. The story of how he did this will be told in Lectures Seven and Eight. In the meantime, we have to examine the century of violence and disorder that produced Henry Tudor, Earl of Richmond, in order to understand the challenges he faced, the magnitude of his achievement, and why even at the height of their power, the Tudors still obsessed about the possibility of a rebellion that might deprive them of the Crown as so many previous kings had been deprived.

To understand England's troubles in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, to find the seeds that bloomed in rebellion, we have to go back 100 years. A century before Bosworth, England was ruled fairly happily by the House of Plantagenet, specifically in the person of a warrior-king by the name of Edward III. Edward III's dates are 1326–1377. In future, when I give you dates of kings, I'll be giving you regnal dates as opposed to the dates of their births and deaths.

Edward III is controversial among historians today, but in his own day, he was very popular. He was thought to have been the perfect model of a medieval warrior-king. In fact, it's a measure of how times have changed that his stock has gone down for us. What made him popular then is now perceived as having created in particular three great problems for subsequent English kings. Those problems were that Edward got along with his barons, that he started a war with France, and that he had six sons.

First, unlike so many medieval kings before him, Edward III got along with his barons. Normally, this is a good thing. It reduces domestic violence, and there's less friction at the center, but the way Edward got along was to concede to them increased power at the expense of the Crown. Specifically, he softened the treason laws, reducing the levying of private war to a mere

felony. He allowed changes in inheritance law that made it harder for the king to claim land back that had been given away by predecessors.

He conceded to every peer the right to sit in the House of Lords. Up until this time, kings could decide whether they were going to summon you as an individual or not. By the way, perhaps we'd better get a little bit of Parliament's history out of the way now. You may be tempted to think of Parliament as an institution that exists to represent the interests of the subject, but that's not how and why Parliament was created. Parliament was originally created by kings in order to gather the most important barons, merchants, and leaders of the realm together so that they could explain their policies and needs in terms of taxation. Parliaments were created for the benefits of monarchs. They weren't created for the benefit of subjects. That's eventually how it worked out. Of course, that's one of the great themes of this course.

He also conceded to Parliament the right to impeach royal officials for misconduct and the right to petition for redress of grievances. He even conceded the right of Parliament to withhold taxation until those grievances had been solved. Edward got away with this because he carried the prestige of a successful warrior and was well liked by his barons. These concessions would make it easier for those barons to challenge some subsequent, weaker king.

The principal reason for Edward III's popularity was that he started a war with France. It was a very long war, which has come to be known by historians as the Hundred Years' War. It lasted off and on from 1337–1453. Please don't imagine over 100 solid years of warfare a la the Second World War. We'll see it was more often fought in fits and starts.

As you may know, the English had possessed territory in France since the Norman Conquest of 1066, which the king and various English aristocrats held as vassals of the king of France. That wasn't really a terrible problem in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, because the kings of France were notoriously weak. Edward and his barons embarked on the war to maintain their feudal independence, to increase their holdings, and to put an end to French support of the Scots.

Of course, as you probably know, medieval barons and kings were always up for a good war.

In 1340, Edward added to the reasons for going to war by using his French descent on his mother's side to claim the Crown of France. It was a claim that was maintained by kings of England throughout this course into the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

In the short run, the Hundred Years' War increased Edward's popularity, in part because he was very successful. By 1360, he conquered more French territory and had even gotten the French king to agree to a subsidy of something like £500,000. In the long run, the English didn't have the resources to hold onto this French territory. In the long run, the Hundred Years' War would end up impoverishing the Crown, embittering France, and destabilizing the government of England, as you will see in the next lecture.

Edward's final mistake, one for which he was praised at the time, was to have six sons. Normally, this would be a good thing. You want an heir; you want some spares. In England, crowns, like other forms of property, descended through the eldest line, in this case, Edward, the Black Prince. Additional sons were, apart from their individual attractions, useful insurance in case something should happen to Edward.

Six was rather a lot. Stop and think about the possibilities of descendents from six sons. Within a couple of generations, you would have scores of claimants to the English throne if something happened to that first line. That is exactly what happened. Edward, the Black Prince predeceased his father in 1376. Fortunately, he had a son, but unfortunately that son, Richard, was only nine-years-old when he succeeded his grandfather, Edward III, in 1377. Richard II would rule until 1399.

Being nine-years-old, it was inevitable that Richard would be dominated by adults for the first half of his reign. His mother, Queen Joan; his uncles, in particular, John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, Edmund, Duke of York, and Thomas, Duke of Gloucester, together formed a regency council. The problem with this is that the uncles along with Parliament got used to running

the country for Richard. They got used to passing laws and pursuing policies that tended to favor their own interests.

As Richard grew older, it became apparent that he wasn't going to stand for this. It also became apparent that he was not Edward. Richard II was a pacifist and an aesthete who preferred artistic pursuits to leading his barons in battle. During his reign, the English court became a center of art and fashion, but he neglected the war with France. He was an absolutist who wanted to reduce the power of Parliament and the power of the barons.

In particular, one baron caught his attention. His cousin, the son of John of Gaunt, Henry Bolingbroke, Earl of Hereford. Hereford had been one of Richard's most avid critics of these policies. In 1397, he was forced to flee to France to exile. He also had his lands confiscated. In fact, Bolingbroke got off lucky. Other peers who opposed Richard II were murdered or executed.

In 1399, Richard II rubbed salt in the wound. At the death of his uncle, John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, he confiscated the lands of Henry Bolingbroke, thus further impoverishing the Earl of Hereford. This was disturbing to the barons because Gaunt (Lancaster) hadn't done anything wrong. He had been loyal to Richard II, even as his son had been a critic.

In 1399, the exiled Bolingbroke, now Duke of Lancaster in his own right, returned and raised a rebellion while Richard was on campaign in Ireland. Bolingbroke was joined by important northern families, for example the Percies, Earls of Northumberland, and the Nevills, Earls of Westmorland.

When it became apparent just how thoroughly Richard had alienated the ruling elite, Henry Bolingbroke, Duke of Lancaster, with Edward III's blood flowing in his veins, began to compass the Crown. "After all, I've got the royal blood, don't I?"—the problem of the six sons.

In August, Richard surrendered and was "lodged" in the Tower of London. On September 30, Richard abdicated in Parliament. In Parliament, Bolingbroke stepped forward and claimed the Crown by right of descent, by right of conquest, and by right of Richard's misrule. The reign of Henry IV and the House of Lancaster had begun.

Before seeing how they did, we should look at this event and assess it for its significance. I think it provides some lessons for future kings. First lesson: No matter how good a king's claim to the throne, the king must be strong. He must be perceived as being strong: Edward III was, Richard II wasn't.

Second lesson: A successful king had to get along with his barons. Maybe not famously, but his barons represent a tremendous force for domestic instability if he doesn't. Third lesson: The same might be said of kings and Parliament. You've got to get along with Parliament. Already, the Crown has come to accept that only Parliament can authorize a tax. Its members can present petitions of grievance and seek redress by statute. They can withhold taxation from the king if he doesn't redress those grievances. They can even examine how those monies are spent. Edward III had conceded this during the Hundred Years' War to get money to fight it.

Finally, it was no accident that Henry Bolingbroke claimed the Crown in Parliament. He needed to show that he had the consent of the country and that was the place to do it, although we'll see that this causes problems for him later.

Fourth lesson: Once deposed, a king cannot be allowed to live free by his usurper because he always represents a focus for future rebellion. Early in 1400, Henry had to put down a number of these rebellions on behalf of Richard. This convinced him to move Richard to Pontefract Castle and almost certainly to have him killed. The legend is that Richard starved to death. We don't know what actually happened, but what is certainly true is that he was gone by mid-February 1400.

Finally, it should be obvious that these actions violated the Great Chain of Being. "God's lieutenant" had been deposed and murdered by his inferior in the chain. A century later, William Shakespeare would see this as the act that began the cycle of 15<sup>th</sup> century violence. In *The Tragedy of King Richard III* [sic *Richard II*], he has the old Bishop of Carlisle stand up in Parliament following Richard's removal from the House of Lords subsequent to his abdication:

What subject can give sentence on his king?  
Who sits here that is not Richard's subject?  
Thieves are not judged but they are by to hear,  
Although apparent guilt be seen in them;  
And shall the figure of God's majesty,

...

Anointed, crowned, planted many years,  
Be judged by subject and inferior breath,  
And he himself not present? O, forfend it, God,  
That in a Christian climate souls refined  
Should show so heinous, black, obscene a deed!  
I speak to subjects, and a subject speaks,  
Stirr'd up by God, thus boldly for his king:  
My Lord of Hereford here, whom you call king,  
Is a foul traitor to proud Hereford's king:  
And if you crown him, let me prophesy:  
The blood of English shall manure the ground,  
And future ages groan for this foul act;

...

O, if you raise this house against this house,  
It will the woefullest division prove  
That ever fell upon this cursed earth.  
Prevent it, resist it, let it not be so,  
Lest child, child's children, cry against you woe!

In fact, the historic Bishop of Carlisle did stand up in the House of Lords and he did say, "This is a mistake! You don't want to do this." He defended Richard. But he did not utter an elaborate prophecy of what would happen if you did. Those words are Shakespeare's, put into Carlisle's mouth. Of course, they're written with hindsight. In other words, Shakespeare is saying, "Do you want to know where it all started? Do you want to know where we went wrong—where we went off the tracks? It happened here."

Thus, the House of Lancaster, which would rule England from 1399–1461, came to the Crown under dubious circumstances and faced a problem of legitimacy throughout its reign. The Lancastrians would always have to

prove that they were the “real” line. They would have trouble calling on the Great Chain of Being to do that, because, of course, they’d broken it.

Henry IV (Henry Bolingbroke) ruled from 1399–1413. He was an intelligent and courageous man. Like Edward III, he was a fine soldier, but he was hampered by poor health, weak finances, and his dubious ascent to the throne. Remember that the basis of his power was that he had usurped the previous king. He was supported by the nobles, and he claimed the Crown in Parliament. This led to baronial resentment of him. “Why should we treat you like the king? You’re not the real king? Come on, you’re one of us. You owe us!”

This spilled over into baronial rebellions, especially between 1400–1408. Circa 1400, a Welsh gentleman named Owen Glendower, chafing under the domination of the Marcher Lords, rebelled. In 1403, he was joined by the Percies. Remember, they had supported Henry, but they’re not satisfied with what Henry is giving them. They were joined as well by the Mortimers, who had inherited Richard’s claim. For a while, the whole north was up in rebellion.

Finally, Henry does defeat the rebels at the battle of Shrewsbury in 1403, but he spends the next five years mopping up opposition. He also endured Parliamentary criticism. On the one hand, they criticized him for having an expensive court, and they also criticized him for not attacking France—which of course would have cost more money. Within a decade, Henry, listless, dispirited, and worn out with care, becomes a caretaker king, increasingly eclipsed by his dashing son, Prince Hal.

Finally, in 1413, Henry dies and Hal succeeds as King Henry V. Henry V would rule from 1413–1422. He faced the same problem of legitimacy as his father, but he did so with a different personality. The former Prince Hal was—at his accession—charismatic, courageous, warlike, pious, and coldly logical. Thus, like his great grandfather Edward III, he was another perfect medieval king in contemporary eyes, which means that modern historians have tended to find him sanctimonious, hypocritical, cruel, selfishly ambitious, and a warmonger. I think you can find both interpretations in modern productions of *Henry V*, the Shakespearean play.



In his defense, it must be said that Henry V inherited a raft of problems from his father and that after the usurpation of Richard II and the reign of Henry IV, the prestige of the monarchy was at a pretty low ebb. Henry decided that what he needed to do was distract his noble subjects with a common enemy, and of course, the English are always blessed with a common enemy, aren't they? There's always the French. Henry V decided to renew the Hundred Years' War.

Fortunately for him, the throne of France was in even worse shape than that of England in 1422. France was ruled by the decrepit Charles VI, who had declined into madness. Real power lay with two noble houses, the House of Burgundy and the House of Orleans. Henry allied with the Burgundians against Charles. In August 1415, he embarked with 10,000 men under his leading nobles. The campaign appealed to them because it promised glory, plunder, and French land. It appealed to the king because this way he could keep an eye on his nobles, and they would be angry at somebody other than him.

The campaign culminated in a brilliant victory by English infantry over a force of French cavalry five times as large at the battle of Agincourt. This battle went down in English legend, helping to create the myth of the English underdog. It would be harkened back to again in 1588 in the face of the Spanish Armada, in 1805 when Napoleon's legions faced the English across the English Channel, and again in 1940.

The thing about Agincourt is that after awhile, it became a case of, "Yeah, but what have you done for me lately?" Agincourt is just about the only English success on the continent between 1415 and 1704, the battle of Blenheim under the Duke of Marlborough. At the moment, it was a great moment of national pride, but after awhile, one gets the sense that the English haven't been able to do anything to top it or even match it in a very long time.

More immediately, the victory at Agincourt persuaded Parliament to fund another campaign, which was fought in 1417. Burgundy had great success as well on behalf of Henry. In 1418, he entered Paris. Two years later, an exhausted Charles VI agreed to the Treaty of Troyes. Henry, according to this treaty, would get to marry Charles's daughter, Catherine of Valois.

According to the treaty, the offspring of that marriage would inherit both the Crown of England and the Crown of France. It's astounding. What's even more astounding is that poor old Charles VI already had a son, the Dauphin, who was supposed to inherit the Crown of France and who is now just written out of the succession.

Unfortunately for Henry V, there are still French provinces in the south that are loyal to the Dauphin, and they rebel. Therefore, he has to go on one more campaign in 1422, which doesn't end terribly well. Henry V dies of a fever while besieging a French city. Because Charles VI died in the same year, the thrones of England and France now pass to a nine-month-old boy who ascends, in England at least, as Henry VI.

Henry VI, being nine-months-old, is going to have a very long reign. He will reign from 1422–1461. Like the last boy-king of England, Henry VI would be dominated during his minority by his family. Unlike Richard, his coming of age in 1437 wouldn't make a whole lot of difference. That is to say, Henry VI was pious, gentle, and well mannered. If you've been paying attention so far, you know that this means he was a disastrous medieval king. Here is a man who founded Eton and King's College, Cambridge—and lost France.

Worse, Henry was mentally impaired and certainly incapable of providing strong leadership. Eventually, he went insane. In the meantime, real power at court was to be found in his relatives, first, until her death in 1437, with Queen Catherine. Then, with a succession of uncles descended from John of Gaunt through his mistress, Catherine Swinford, the Beaufort family. Most notably, there was Henry Cardinal Beaufort and successive dukes of Somerset—I won't enumerate them. There were three in a row.

Finally, from 1444, one of the big powers at court along with the Beauforts is Henry's wife, Margaret of Anjou. All of these advisors have two things in common. One, they urge Henry to make peace with France. You'll notice that two of them are French. Is that a little suspicious? Second, they're all famous for lining their pockets at the government's expense. They're all famously corrupt.

There's only a little bit of opposition. At the beginning of the reign, there's yet another royal uncle. Remember, Edward III had six sons. There are royal uncles under every rock. This one, Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, urges an aggressive foreign policy against France. He wants to clean up the corruption at court. He also founded the Bodleian Library at Oxford, so I'm a great fan of Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester.

In 1441, his wife was accused of bewitching the addlebrained king. This is a brilliant court ploy. On the one hand, you explain why Henry VI is not quite all there, and on the other hand, you get rid of a court rival. By 1447, Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, has been arrested and locked up. He dies in custody.

The resultant lack of leadership, government corruption, and declining royal finances, combined with revived French nationalism, led to a gradual erosion of England's position in France. In 1429, inspired by Joan of Arc, an army loyal to the Dauphin captures Orleans. The next year, Joan was captured by the Burgundians and given to the English, who burnt her as a heretic. That didn't stop the French from crowning the Dauphin as King Charles VII of France.

In 1435, the Burgundians abandon their English alliance. In 1436, Paris falls to the French. In 1450, the English are driven out of Normandy and by 1453, virtually out of France. After 1453, all that's left of William the Conqueror's empire, of Edward III's empire, of Henry V's empire, is the little channel port of Calais. France had won the Hundred Years' War.

Its loser was to be the House of Lancaster. Defeat in France led to a decline in popularity of the Lancastrian regime and the prestige of the monarchy. Remember, the Lancastrians already had a legitimacy problem. According to the Great Chain of Being, they're not the "real" line. What they had going for them was that they had proved, unlike Richard II, that they were militarily strong—that they were good leaders. Now, they don't even have that going for them.

Moreover, the wars in France had been very expensive. Parliament had had to be called on a lot to offer money for them. The wars had wrecked

England's trade with France. As a result, the customs revenue falls. By the 1450s, the revenue of the English Crown is about £30,000 a year. To give you a point of comparison, under Richard II, it was £120,000 a year. The revenue has fallen to around a quarter of what it had once been.

Remember that aristocratic landowners are already dealing with the pinch following the Black Death. Wages are going up, food prices are going down, and now they have to pay high taxes for a losing war. For all these reasons, and because they fear that the money would go to the Beauforts, the House of Commons in Parliament is very reluctant to vote more taxation. As a result, the king could neither pay his debts nor raise new armies to maintain order.

In 1450, the gentry of Kent and their tenants, led by one Jack Cade, revolt in protest over high taxes. The rebels actually defeat a royal army at Seven Oaks in June, and they enter London in July. Here's what one of the rebels said of the king: "His law is lost. His merchandise is lost. His commons are destroyed. The sea is lost. France is lost. Himself is made so poor that he may not pay for his meat or drink. He oweth more and is greater in debt than ever was king in England."

In fact, the revolt collapsed because it received no aristocratic support, but the English aristocracy was not going to be patient forever—in particular, the greatest of all English aristocrats, Richard, Duke of York. Richard, Duke of York, was the greatest noble landowner in England. He was also yet another descendant of Edward III, on his father's side, from Edward's fifth son, Edmund, Duke of York, and on his mother's side from Edward's third son, Lionel, Duke of Clarence. He could claim to have at least as much appropriate blood in him as did Henry VI. He was also married into the powerful Nevill family, Earls of Warwick. Despite all this potential, Richard started off as a loyal vassal. He went to court, he expected to get jobs for his clients, he expected to be admitted a part of the Council, but in fact, the Beauforts had sown everything up.

When in the 1450s the king began to decline into psychological depression and the country into economic depression, he began to rally an opposition to the Beauforts. In 1451, after Normandy fell, Edmund Beaufort, Duke of

Somerset, leader of the Beaufort faction, was banished. One MP (Member of Parliament) called for Richard to be proclaimed the king's heir.

In March 1454, after the king collapsed into a state of catatonic schizophrenia, Parliament named Richard Lord Protector of the Realm, to administer it while the king recovered. Late in the year, Henry did experience a partial recovery and Somerset returned, but the court wasn't big enough for these two men. Finally, their affinities rose and fought each other at the battle of St. Albans in 1455.

The Wars of the Roses had begun.

# Medieval Prelude: 1455–85

## Lecture 6

**“And if you crown him, let me prophesy: / The blood of English shall manure the ground, / And future ages groan for this foul act;”**

**—William Shakespeare, *Richard II*, 4.1.**

**T**he Wars of the Roses were a series of skirmishes between supporters of the Lancastrian king, Henry VI, and the would-be Yorkist king, Richard, Duke of York. No flowers were involved. (The roses are derived from Shakespeare’s Henry VI; the term *Wars of the Roses*, from Sir Walter Scott). The wars were made possible by the immense power of the nobility, many of whom had large private armies, or *affinities*, with which to fight one another or the Crown. The wars were fought in several phases: The year 1455 saw a Yorkist victory at St. Albans, Hertfordshire, after which Richard was named Lord Protector of the realm. This led to an uneasy truce at court and in the country. The period 1459–1461 saw a series of pitched battles all across England, some won by the Lancastrians and some, by the Yorkists.

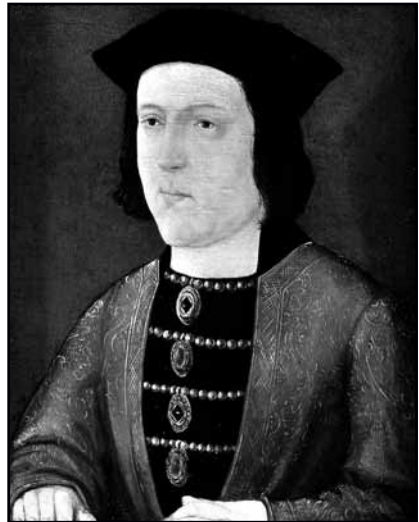
During this latter period, the Lancastrian government punished numerous Yorkist peers by parliamentary acts of attainder, forcing them to forfeit their lives, titles, and lands. This embittered many heretofore neutral barons against the Lancastrian regime. Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick (soon to be nicknamed “Kingmaker”) returned from European exile with fresh troops for the Yorkist cause. Richard, Duke of York, was killed at the battle of Wakefield (December 1460). His eldest son, Edward, Duke of York, claimed the Crown. In March 1461, the City of London closed its gates to a Lancastrian army under Queen Margaret and proclaimed the Duke of York King Edward IV. In the spring of 1461, Edward’s armies won a crushing victory at Towton Moor, Yorkshire, and mopped up resistance. The Yorkists appeared to have won the Wars of the Roses and established the House of York on the English throne.

The House of York faced the same questions about legitimacy that had undermined its predecessor. Fortunately, their first king was a good

advertisement for the line. Edward IV (1461–1483) was intelligent, warlike, and competent and looked the part of a king—all in contrast to the former Henry VI, now imprisoned in the Tower of London. He liked magnificent clothing and elaborate public rituals, which restored some of the dignity of the monarchy. He pursued a Pacific foreign policy designed to save money, foster trade, and eliminate foreign support for the Lancastrians. This helps to explain why, in 1470–1471, he succeeded in defeating a major Lancastrian rebellion assisted by Warwick and his disaffected brother, the Duke of Clarence. This led to the public execution of Warwick and the quiet elimination of Clarence and the deposed Henry VI.

Now more firmly established, Edward IV pursued reform of central and local government by better conserving the royal lands, leading to increased revenue. He promoted trade, which increased customs yields. He filled offices with merchants and professionals,

who had professional expertise but could not challenge his authority, as a great noble could. He created new, more efficient institutions, such as the Court of Star Chamber and the Council of the Marches for Wales. Unfortunately, Edward was also something of a libertine. He died young and unexpectedly, in April 1483. This brought to the throne his 12-year-old son, Edward V (1483).



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**Unlike the former Henry VI, Edward IV was competent and intelligent.**

Yorkists worried that the boy-king would be unable to maintain his authority and stifle Lancastrian resistance. This may explain the behavior of his remaining paternal uncle, Richard, Duke of Gloucester, during the spring of 1483. Richard seized Edward from the custody of a maternal uncle, Anthony Woodville, Earl Rivers, whom he had executed. He then had Edward and his

younger brother, Richard, Duke of York, declared illegitimate, paving the way for his own accession to the throne as King Richard III. He housed the inconvenient nephews, Edward and Richard, in the Tower of London, where they were probably murdered on his order. (Other possibilities, for example, death by natural causes, tantalize but remain purely conjectural.)

Richard III (1483–1485) was, like his brother, an intelligent and competent king. His poor popular reputation derives largely from Tudor propagandists, such as Sir Thomas More and Shakespeare. But his regime was overwhelmed within two years by the same questions of legitimacy that had discredited the Lancastrians. He continued his brother's administrative and financial reforms, but he faced repeated rebellions, from Lancastrians and even his own former supporters. In 1483, Henry Stafford, Duke of Buckingham, yet another descendant of Edward III, launched a failed rebellion. He paid for his failure with his head. In the summer of 1485, Henry Tudor, Earl of Richmond, returned from European exile bearing Lancastrian blood (and thus that of Edward III) on his mother's side. He landed in Wales, from which he launched another rebellion. The Earl of Richmond defeated Richard III on 22 August 1485 at Bosworth Field, Leicestershire, claiming the Crown and establishing the House of Tudor. ■

**Richard III[']s ... poor popular reputation derives largely from Tudor propagandists, such as Sir Thomas More and Shakespeare.**

### Suggested Reading

Bucholz and Key, *Early Modern England*, chap. 1, sec. 1.

Davies, *Peace, Print and Protestantism*, chap. 4.

Pollard, *Wars of the Roses*.

### Questions to Consider

1. What qualities make a successful king? What qualities make a failure? How important was legitimacy and the right blood line to this equation?



2. A number of professional and amateur historians have attempted to rehabilitate Richard III, seeking to prove (1) that he did not murder the princes in the Tower and (2) that he was a good king. Why should Richard have achieved such a following more than five centuries after his death? What does the “Ricardian Revival” say about our own times?

## Medieval Prelude: 1455–85

### Lecture 6—Transcript

In the last lecture, we saw how Henry IV and the Lancastrian kings had broken the Great Chain of Being to win Richard II's throne. After the successful but brief reign of Henry V, England was ruled by that amiable non-entity Henry VI, who allowed his Beaufort relatives to lose France and run England in their own interests. The results seemed to confirm the curse implied if one broke the chain:

And if you crown him, let me prophesy:  
The blood of English shall manure the ground,  
And future ages groan for this foul act;

This lecture addresses the “groan” of those future ages in the resultant Wars of the Roses, which lasted from 1455–1461, 1469–1470, and then 1485 again; the short-lived triumph and rule of the Yorkist kings, 1461–1485; and the rebellion of Henry Tudor, Earl of Richmond, which would end their reign and, unbeknownst to all, end the Wars of the Roses as well.

The Wars of the Roses were a series of skirmishes between supporters of the Lancastrian king, Henry VI, and the would-be Yorkist king, Richard, Duke of York, that raged most furiously from 1455–1461 and beyond. No flowers were involved. The “roses” first appeared in Shakespeare's *Henry VI* in which two prominent characters pluck roses of different colors to show their different allegiances. It's true that the white rose along with the white heart and the white bore was one of the symbols of the Yorkist side, but the red rose was only associated with the Tudors. It was only applied to the Lancastrians retrospectively.

The term *Wars of the Roses* is probably an 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century invention. The usual candidate that's proposed is Sir Walter Scott. Nobody called it the Wars of the Roses at the time.

The wars were made possible, and to a great extent caused, by three things, two of which we addressed in the last lecture. First, the incompetence of the Lancastrian regime. Second, the shaky Lancastrian claim, though you

understand that (2) wouldn't have mattered if not for (1). Three, the existence of vast private noble armies, or *affinities*, with which to fight each other and/or the Crown.

That is, each nobleman in England stood at the head of a vast entourage centered on his household. These included his steward, or estate manager; his bailiffs to run his estates; secretaries and clerks to keep his accounts and maintain his communications; household servants; chamberlains; gentlemen waiters; valets; butlers; cooks; maids; stable servants; furriers; footmen; grooms; farm laborers; tenants; and military retainers to defend his house and project his power. He also had clients all throughout the county and often at court.

These were no longer feudal relationships in the old sense, where the lord gives you land and in return you give him your lifelong loyalty. These people were working for wages—they were working for money. They would sometimes break their relationship with one peer and move on to another. Such loyalty was based on a cash nexus, which is why historians sometimes call this “bastard feudalism.” It isn't really real feudalism.

These armies make the Wars of the Roses possible. To maintain such a vast army of retainers, you had to do two things. First, you had to pay them, which required lots of money. Remember, thanks to the Lancastrians, there isn't a lot of money in the realm. The nobility is fed up with high taxes. They didn't get the plunder from France they expected. Or you've got to find them jobs. Remember, the Beauforts had sowed up all the jobs.

The greatest affinity in England besides the king's was that headed by Richard, Duke of York. As we saw in Lecture Six [sic Five], as the king began to decline into madness and the country into chaos, Richard began to demand a seat at the table of royal government. This demand culminated in the battle of St. Albans in 1455. I want to make clear: York is not fighting the king in 1455, he's fighting the Beauforts. He's fighting the Duke of Somerset. He would argue that, “I'm just trying to free the king from unscrupulous advisors” (which by the way is always the excuse for attacking the king).

At least, at this point, we have no indication that Richard was thinking about the Crown.

After 1455, the Duke of Somerset is killed in battle. The Beaufort faction is down, but it's not out. It's now led by Queen Margaret. Both sides bide their time at court, sniping at each other in the hallways, and waiting for an opening. That opening comes in 1459. In that year, the Wars of the Roses is renewed. The conflict between them heats up again.

I'm now going to describe a series of bewildering battles that took place between 1459 and 1461. You'll see that they see-sawed back and forth. In September 1459, the Yorkists won a victory at Blore Heath, Staffordshire, but a month later, at Ludford Bridge in Shropshire, they lost. They lost big. Richard Nevill, Earl of Warwick, York's most important supporter, was forced to flee to France. This victory gave the Lancastrians the upper hand in Parliament, and they used it. They passed a series of attainders against important Yorkist peers, ruining them.

This actually backfired with the country, because a lot of people felt that the Lancastrians were being vindictive. Remember that Richard II had also ruined a lot of peers and that in the end, that's one of the reasons that people joined Henry Bolingbroke's side.

At this point, the Duke of York may have realized that he was no longer fighting the Beauforts. He was going to fight the king. He was going to become king himself if he possibly could.

In June 1460, Warwick, soon to be nicknamed "Kingmaker," returned from Europe with fresh troops for the Yorkist cause. In July, the Yorkists defeated the king's forces at Northampton, Northamptonshire. Richard formally laid claim to the Crown.

But, he made a mistake. He didn't tell any of his followers. Apparently, everybody said, "What? You're what? You want to be what?" He didn't receive any support. Apparently, this proposal was made in Parliament, and it was met with deafening silence.

In December, the Yorkists were defeated—he was defeated—at the battle of Wakefield in Yorkshire, and Richard, Duke of York, was unfortunately killed. This meant that his claim now passed to his eldest son, Edward, who became Duke of York and claimed the Crown.

At this point, the Lancastrians are back on top, and Queen Margaret marches on London in triumph, but in March 1461, the citizens of London do an amazing thing. You have to realize that it's always a bit of an imponderable what London will do. It's so important that what it does often has a dramatic effect on the history of the country. They closed the gates to Margaret. Maybe they were fed up with Lancastrian incompetence. They'd certainly heard stories about the rapacity of her army.

Instead, on Sunday, March 4, 1461, the citizens of London and members of the nobility acclaimed the Duke of York as King Edward IV. This of course meant that, as in chess, there were now two kings. Put another way, it was one thing for Edward to say, "I'm the king." It was another thing for him to enforce it.

At the end of that month, during a seven-hour melee fought in a blinding snowstorm on Towton Moor in Yorkshire, Edward's forces defeated the Lancastrians. Edward returned to his capital in triumph. The Yorkists had won the Wars of the Roses—maybe.

The reign of King Edward IV and the House of York has begun. That's certainly true. Of course, the House of York now faced all the same questions that the Lancastrians had faced. The Yorkists won not because they had a better claim. You could argue about the two claims. They won because everybody was fed up with corruption in this government, high taxes, military defeat, disorder in the countryside, and the vindictiveness of the Lancastrian regime.

This was great news for Edward when he was trying for the throne. "I'm happy that everyone is so unhappy." But of course, you realize that the minute he becomes king, he needs people to start respecting the monarchy again. Parliament and the nobility had gotten into this rather bad habit of

questioning the king, possibly even rebelling against the king, when they didn't like his policies.

Most of the nobility took a “wait and see” attitude to the new king. Clearly, this new king, if he was to found a line that was going to last and not be a one-reign wonder, was going to have to do a better job than the Lancastrians had done. Edward IV ruled from 1461–1483. Fortunately, he was a good advertisement for the new line. Edward was intelligent, warlike, and supremely competent. It didn't hurt that he was also tall (about 6 feet and 3 and one-half inches tall), handsome, and something of a clotheshorse. I'm sure we would all agree that these are superficial qualities, but we can also all agree that appearances do matter. We are well aware that one of the most basic requirements of any U.S. president is that he or she look “presidential.” It was certainly true for kings. The most basic requirement is that you have to at least look like a king.

Henry VI didn't look much like a king. He was famous for wearing this sort of tatty old blue robe and living in seclusion, which of course makes sense given his mental state. It was a nice change and good for the monarchy that Edward IV liked magnificent clothing and elaborate public display. He made sure that he was easy of access—that his subjects could always get in to see him. All these tendencies restored some of the fallen dignity of the monarchy.

These qualities also all had their dark side. Edward was lazy. As a consequence, he tended to rely on great nobles to get things done. There was Warwick, the “Kingmaker;” his friend William, Lord Hastings; and his youngest brother, Richard, Duke of Gloucester. Remember that name.

Edward was also something of a womanizer. His love for beautiful women may explain why in 1464 he marries the otherwise obscure Elizabeth Woodville. The marriage was very controversial. The Woodvilles were upstarts, and Edward immediately starts rewarding them with offices. Worse, he offends Warwick. You see, Warwick had been planning a diplomatic marriage with a princess of France and instead, Edward throws himself away on this common woman.

These cracks in the Yorkist affinity are dangerous, because the Lancastrians are still out there. There's Queen Margaret and her son Prince Edward. As for Henry VI, he was finally captured in 1465 and locked up in the Tower, but Margaret and Edward don't think the Wars of the Roses are over. They spent the 1460s in exile raising troops among England's old enemies, the French and the Scots. Remember, I said it's really dangerous to let members of royal families live once they've been deposed.

The Earl of Warwick, too, still thought himself a kingmaker. When the king snubbed his advice on the French match for the Woodvilles, he raises affinity and enters into armed rebellion in 1469. He was joined by the king's other brother, George, Duke of Clarence, who was Warwick's son-in-law. They were joined in the autumn of 1470 by Queen Margaret, Prince Edward, and Louis XI of France—so everybody's conspiring against Edward IV.

The new Yorkist regime almost collapses. Edward is forced to flee to the Netherlands. Henry VI is freed from the Tower and is restored to his throne.

Edward returned the following year. Supported again by the fickle Clarence, he defeats and slays Warwick in April 1471 at the battle of Barnet in Hertfordshire. Two weeks later, the Yorkist forces catch up with Prince Edward at Tewksbury in Gloucester, killing him. Finally, a few weeks after that it was announced that poor King Henry had died in the Tower “of pure displeasure and melancholy on or about 24 May, 1471.” Edward IV was not about to let this happen again.

The Lancastrian line was virtually extinct. It's last remaining claimant—or at least its best claimant—came through Margaret Beaufort, who you'll remember is a descendant of John of Gaunt and his mistress, Catherine Swinford. That claim now lies in the hands of young Henry Tudor, Earl of Richmond, whom nobody is thinking much of at this point, but Henry does decide that it might be best to flee to Brittany.

Once again, the Wars of the Roses were over. Clearly, Edward didn't want to have to go through that again. Both before and after the rebellion, he pursued a series of policies that were designed to enhance the prestige of the monarchy so that he wouldn't have to go through that again. For example,

he realized that the Lancastrians had squandered their throne in France, so he pursued a pacific foreign policy. This was designed to save money, foster trade, and eliminate embarrassing military defeats and foreign support for the Lancastrians. If I make friends abroad, then the Lancastrians won't have a safe harbor.

He revived the health of the royal finances by pursuing reform of central and local government. He also conserved Crown lands better. One of the things he did was he brought vast estates to the Crown as Duke of York. He confiscated Lancastrian lands, and he was very careful not to give a lot of land away the way Henry VI had done with the Beauforts. He cut down on grants of royal land.

He promoted trade, which increased customs yields. As a result, he rarely has to call a Parliament. He reduced corruption and increased efficiency by employing not so much great noblemen in positions of authority, though there were those men at the top like Richard, Duke of Gloucester, but merchants and lawyers, who very often knew how to get things done. Note that merchants and lawyers too were not so individually powerful that they could challenge Edward. It's very smart.

Where old institutions couldn't be fixed, he was perfectly willing to invent new ones. One of the most interesting is that he began to use the council as a court of law. This became known as the Court of Star Chamber because it met in a room of Westminster Palace that was painted with stars on the ceiling.

The Court of Star Chamber was just the council acting as a court. Two great men have a dispute, so they come to the council to have it adjudicated. Believe it or not, this court was very popular. Because it was new, it didn't have a lot of procedures that gummed up the works. As a consequence, people liked the fact that its justice was swift, even though its justice might also sometimes be terrible.

All of this restored a measure of order and stability to the nation. Even Thomas More, no friend of the Yorkists, wrote, "In which time of his (Edward's) later days, this realm was in a quiet and prosperous estate."



Unfortunately, Edward still had a lot of work to do when he succumbed to a fever—perhaps all that feverish womanizing—on 9 April 1483.

This brought to the throne his 12-year-old son, Edward V, another boy-king. By now, if you've been paying attention to these lectures, you know that these never end well. Like all boy-kings, Edward would have to have a regency council to govern the realm during his minority. Like all regency councils, it would be dominated by his uncles, and there was a problem. Remember who his uncles are. On the one hand, there's Edward's brother, Richard, Duke of Gloucester. You may be wondering what happened to Clarence. Somehow, the fickle Clarence, who sometimes opposed Edward IV and sometimes supported him, had ended up dead, it is said drowned in a butt of malmsey wine in the Tower of London. We don't know; we just know that he disappeared one day.

There's Richard, Duke of Gloucester, on Edward V's father's side, and on his mother's side, the Woodvilles. You'll remember that the Woodvilles and the rest of the Yorkists don't like each other at all. In fact, Richard, Duke of Gloucester, has two problems. One is an in-law problem. He's afraid that he's going to get supplanted on the regency council by the Woodvilles and supplanted in the affections of his nephew. His other problem is that he's not sure that a 12-year-old boy can face down the Lancastrians. There are still Lancastrians out there who don't think the Wars of the Roses are over, and England is ruled by a 12-year-old boy.

What is Richard, Duke of Gloucester, who's worked his entire life to support the Yorkist claim, going to do? We'll find out.

When Henry IV died, the Prince of Wales, now Edward V, was actually living in Wales with his maternal uncle, Anthony Woodville, Earl Rivers. On hearing of the king's death, they begin to move east towards London. In the meantime, Richard has been holding down the north for his brother, Edward IV. He begins to move south with Henry Stafford, Duke of Buckingham. Buckingham is one of the richest peers in the realm and, you guessed it, another descendant of Edward III. File that away.

All of these people met at Stony Stratford, Northamptonshire, on the 30<sup>th</sup> of April. Richard immediately seized Rivers on a charge of plotting against him, Richard. Soon after, Rivers was executed. Queen Elizabeth in London, the mother of Edward V, hears this and immediately flees to Westminster Abbey, accompanied by her younger son, Richard, Duke of York.

By the way, at this stage, you may be a little bit confused with all these Edwards, Richards, and claimants to the Crown. In a way, I don't mind that because that is an illustration of just what the Bishop of Carlisle was talking about—what would happen to the English monarchy and the Great Chain of Being if you tinkered with it: confusion.

In the meantime, Richard, Duke of Gloucester, and King Edward continue south, entering London to the cheers of the populace on the 4<sup>th</sup> of May. The council, dominated by Richard's allies, accepts the charge of a Woodville conspiracy and names Richard Lord Protector of the Realm. The Woodvilles have been gotten rid of. Richard has solved his in-law problem.

But he hasn't solved his Lancastrian problem or satisfied his own ambition. Historians will never know what was in Gloucester's mind for what he did next. I would argue that his actions pretty much speak for themselves. On 13 June 1483, at a council meeting to plan the coronation, Richard had the Lord Chamberlain of the household, one of Edward's old trusted servants, Lord Hastings, seized and beheaded without trial. Soon after, Richard's allies made the suggestion that Edward IV, famous for his sexual exploits, might very well have contracted a marriage previous to that with Elizabeth Woodville.

In canon law, a promise to marry is as good as a marriage. If Edward had done this—and remember he's not here to deny it, he's dead—then that would mean that the boys, Edward V and Richard, Duke of York, were not legitimate heirs to the throne. Let me see: If you eliminate the boys, who's left? Who would be the next King of England? Oh, yes, Edward's younger brother, Richard, Duke of Gloucester. Somehow, they got Parliament to buy this. Somehow, the Duke of Gloucester gets himself crowned King Richard III on 6 July 1483.

But what about the boys? You've got to do something about the boys. At this point, Richard lodges the boys in the Tower of London. Defenders of Richard always point out that the Tower of London was a royal residence, and there's nothing untoward about this. In fact, recent research done by historic royal palaces in England, who's in charge of running these, has concluded that kings and queens of England never lived in the Tower of London. It was officially a residence, but they almost never lodged there. It was a prison.

In the middle of July, the boys were seen playing on the Tower walls. As July fades into August, they're seen less and less, and eventually they're seen no more. Some 200 years later, in 1674, two skeletons are found underneath a staircase in the Tower of London during renovations. It wasn't until 1933 that modern forensic examination was performed on them. The conclusion was that gender could not be determined, nor manner of death, but they were consistent with a 12-year-old and a nine-year-old—the ages of Edward IV's two sons when they disappeared.

That was enough for the British royal family. They are buried in Westminster Abbey. It has also been enough for most historians, but as you probably know, there's an avid group of Ricardian defenders out there—even a whole Richard III society—arguing that Richard didn't do it and that at most he was just a negligent host. There were lots of other people who had motive and opportunity, like the Duke of Buckingham, who wanted to be king and who was constable of the Tower; like Henry Tudor, Earl of Richmond—although there's a little detail that he was away in France at the time, but still, he would have wanted the boys dead too. They were standing in his way.

Barring new evidence, only two things are certain. Number one, this is one of the great murder mysteries of English history, along with Jack the Ripper in 1888, and I would add Amy, Lady Dudley, in the 1560s, and Sir Edmund Burry-Godfrey in the 1670s. You're going to hear about both of those in this course.

By now, of course, you're just dying to know what I think. I think Occam's razor slices through all of Richard's alibis, quite frankly. I think Richard had motive, he had opportunity as King of England—the Tower of London being at his beck and call—and I think we've seen that this guy is not above

shedding familial blood to suit his purposes. Richard was not anything but a fairly ruthless character. I have no trouble believing he did it.

If you don't want to believe he did it, I can offer you a way out. In July 1483, commentators noted that Edward V was suffering a fever. You know that the Tower of London is down by the river. Fevers easily turned fatal in those days, and the fever could easily have been communicated to Richard, Duke of York, as well. It's perfectly possible that the two boys died of natural causes and that Richard didn't produce the bodies because he knew that if he produced the bodies, he would be accused of murdering the princes.

Which brings me to the second undeniable fact about the loss of the princes in the Tower: Regardless of whether he did it or not, everyone assumed that Richard did it. People were sure that Richard had killed the nephews. As a result, this regime carried with it the stigma of blood and illegitimacy from the very beginning, which is really too bad. Like his brother, Richard III was in many respects a pretty good king. He only reigned for two years, from 1483–1485. During that time, he demonstrated that he was intelligent and competent, not the hunchback monster of Tudor propaganda (Tudor propaganda would include More's history and Shakespeare's play).

He had proved himself able and courageous during the Wars of the Roses. He was highly cultured and continued his brother's administrative and financial reforms. His Parliaments passed legislation that was favorable for trade and the economy. It turns out he wasn't all that hunchbacked. When they subjected his portrait to x-ray, they found that some painter had actually added to the hump to make him appear more crook-backed than he was. The theory is that it was Henry Tudor. It was Henry VII and his people who afterwards did this to make him appear like more of a monster than he was in real life.

In any case, whatever Richard's physical attraction, he could never wipe away the stain of the bloody opening of his reign and the tenuousness of his claim to the throne. In fact, both encouraged others to try for the same prize.

In the fall of 1483, Richard's erstwhile ally, the Duke of Buckingham, had a go, losing his head in the process. He raises a rebellion in the fall of 1483, right after Richard takes the Crown, but Buckingham fails.

In the summer of 1485, a Welsh nobleman with only the most tenuous Lancastrian claim returned from continental exile to seize the day. Henry Tudor, Earl of Richmond, had been born in 1457. His father was Edmund Tudor, Earl of Richmond, a great Welsh landowner and the son of Owen Tudor. Owen Tudor had married Henry V's widow, Queen Catherine, the one who'd been married as a result of the Treaty of Troyes. Owen Tudor had actually been executed by Edward IV because he carried this blood, but can we agree that this is royal blood of the most tangential kind. It comes through the female line, and it's actually French royal blood.

But Henry Tudor's mother was Margaret Beaufort, and she was a direct, but female, descendant of John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, through his mistress, later his wife, Catherine Swinford. Henry Tudor's claim runs through the female line in both directions and through a royal mistress.

Still, when the Lancastrian cause collapsed in 1471, he had had to flee because he was seen as a possible claimant to the throne. In August 1485, he returned with about 2,000 supporters, landing at Milford Haven in Wales. He lands in Wales because his lands are in Wales, and this is a place where he can get support. He thinks that he will be able to gather supporters as he moves along, but in fact, support came slowly. So many previous rebellions had failed.

Eventually, as in 1399, noble families, disaffected towards Richard, do begin to flock towards him. As we noted at the beginning of the previous lecture, the two armies met at Bosworth Field in Leicestershire on 22 August 1485. Richard, who's supposed to have had nightmares the night before the battle, found out just how weak his support was when, in a pre-planned move, the powerful Stanley family actually abandons him. The Earls of Derby abandon his affinity in the middle of the battle. They go over to Henry, Earl of Richmond. This must have been a terribly discouraging moment for Richard.

In fact, it was a party of Stanley retainers who cut Richard down as he was unhorsed in a brave desperate charge of Henry's bodyguard. Richard knows he's losing, so he rides hell for leather right at Henry's bodyguard, knowing he's going to be cut down. In the words of a Tudor chronicler who otherwise hated Richard III, "Then, truly in a moment, the residue of the Yorkist army all fled, and King Richard alone was killed, fighting manfully in the thickest press of his enemies."

The sun of the House of York had set. The day belonged to the House of Richmond.

In this lecture, we traced the Wars of the Roses. We saw how the question of legitimacy continued to plague both Lancastrian and Yorkist kings. That question could be postponed by good government: Edward IV. It could be accelerated and made more meaningful by bad government: Henry VI.

We also saw how the events of the previous century had taught and tempted great nobles to compass the Crown themselves or play kingmaker, taking it for others. The result was a cycle of violence, uncertainty, and disorder.

In the next lecture, we will learn whether the new king, Henry VII, could break that cycle.

# Establishing the Tudor Dynasty: 1485–97

## Lecture 7

**Monarchs with stronger claims and better prospects had all ended up dead. Moreover, at Henry VII's succession in 1485, there remained in play numerous descendants of Edward III and York as claimants to the Crown, some with better claims than Henry. ... These facts would dictate many of Henry's policy decisions throughout his reign.**

**A**t Henry VII's accession in 1485, there remained numerous descendants of Edward III and Yorkist claimants to the Crown, some with better claims than Henry. That fact would dictate many of his policy decisions throughout the reign, and it would require a particular kind of personality. The new king was a study in contrasts. In particular, historians have long argued about whether he was more a harbinger of a modern, practical future or a creature of the medieval past. He was modern and Machiavellian before the words were coined. That is, he was shrewd and hardheaded, capable of sharp practice if it strengthened his position, but also content to let sleeping dogs lie; he was not given to revenge or vendetta unless they served a practical purpose. But Henry was also medieval. For example, he was a loyal son of the church who heard two to three masses a day, burned heretics, and built the Henry VII Chapel at Westminster Abbey.

Henry's love of ceremony might be interpreted as both modern and medieval. He was a master of propaganda who consciously blackened Richard III's reputation. Like Edward IV, he knew the value of elaborate rituals and the importance of a regal appearance. His seizure of the Crown demonstrates his more modern traits. He got himself crowned quickly, *then* called a Parliament to recognize him and his line. He had Parliament ruin, via acts of attainder, the most prominent Yorkist peers and officeholders. However, he continued to employ incumbent middling and minor Yorkist officials in order to keep the government running, secure their loyalty, and deprive Yorkist challengers of a rank and file.

Henry married Elizabeth of York, daughter of Edward IV, thus uniting the Lancastrian and Yorkist claims in the subsequent Tudor line. But the marriage

took place months after his coronation so that no one would think his claim depended on her. In 1486, the couple had their first son, whom they named, symbolically, Arthur. In the spring of 1486, Henry progressed, with his army, through Yorkist strongholds in the north, to show them who was boss. These were wise initial steps, but they did not, by themselves, ensure peace. Yorkist rebellions were a constant worry.

Because most real Yorkist claimants were conveniently imprisoned or dead, these challenges came from imposters. Lambert Simnel, the son of a baker but claiming to be the imprisoned Yorkist Earl of Warwick, raised a rebellion in 1487. Though supported by the Irish, he was defeated easily at the battle of East Stoke. Perkin Warbeck, the son of a Flemish government official but claiming to be the deceased Richard, Duke of York, raised rebellions in 1495, and 1497. Though supported by the rulers of France, Scotland, and the Holy Roman Empire, these rebellions, too, were defeated. In Henry's mind, these uprisings demonstrated three things: that the Yorkist alternative was still a threat; that, nevertheless, his people were sick of rebellion, civil war, and "musical crowns"; and that his regime had to make friends abroad, if only to eliminate support there for further rebellions.

**In Henry's mind, these uprisings demonstrated ... that his regime had to make friends abroad, if only to eliminate support there for further rebellions.**

Henry pursued a series of diplomatic threats, marriages, and alliances. He began by seeking a French alliance. Initially rebuffed, Henry got the French king's attention by threatening to support the rebellious nobles of

Brittany. The result was the Treaty of Etaples (1492), which reestablished trade and resulted in a subsidy to Henry of £5,000 for 15 years. Henry then used trade embargoes to force the Holy Roman Emperor to withdraw support for Warbeck.

Henry next engineered the marriage of his daughter, Margaret, to the Stuart King James IV of Scotland in 1503. (This would be the source of the later Stuart claim to the throne of England.) Finally and most importantly, after protracted negotiation, Henry's son Arthur married Catherine of Aragon,



daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain, in 1501. This was potentially Henry's greatest coup, because Spain was rapidly acquiring a worldwide empire. But Arthur died a few months later. This gave Ferdinand and Henry the excuse for protracted negotiations to try to gain the upper hand on each other. In the end, Catherine did not marry Henry's surviving son, Prince Henry, until 1509, after Henry VII was dead. Still, by the mid-1490s, Tudor England was surrounded by, if not friends, then relatives. Henry VII's shrewd foreign policy, combined with his cultivation of good relations with the church, ensured that at his death in 1509, England had no significant foreign enemies. In the next lecture, we examine what he did to eliminate challenges at home. ■

### Suggested Reading

Bucholz and Key, *Early Modern England*, chap. 1, sec. 2.

Davies, *Peace, Print and Protestantism*, chap. 4.

Guy, *Tudor England*, chaps. 1, 3.

### Questions to Consider

1. Compare Henry VII's accession to the Crown with those of Henry IV and Edward IV. What did he do similarly and what, differently? Is it clear from these opening moves why the Tudors would last longer on the English throne than the Lancastrians or the Yorkists?
2. Why were contemporaries so ready to embrace imposters as heirs to the throne of England? Why were those imposters able to find support among the crowned heads of Europe?

# Establishing the Tudor Dynasty: 1485–97

## Lecture 7—Transcript

In the last two lectures, we examined England's political troubles of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, culminating in the Wars of the Roses. This lecture will begin to explain what Henry VII did to end those troubles and establish his own Tudor dynasty. Specifically, we'll examine the immediate aftermath of his victory over Richard III at Bosworth Field and the steps he took to secure the Crown. We'll then treat a number of Yorkist rebellions against his rule, and Henry's responses on the foreign policy fronts. We'll see that in order to preserve his fledgling dynasty, Henry entered into a combination of saber rattling and marital diplomacy (this is what the Tudors would later refer to as "rough wooing") to secure alliances with France, Scotland, and Spain.

By 1485, England had experienced civil war for over three decades and dynastic instability for almost a century. A betting man or woman would have been ill-advised to wager on the new guy. He was only 28 and apart from his luck at Bosworth, he was largely untried. He had no experience of government. In fact, he'd never even run his own estate, for he had spent much of his youth on the run, first in Brittany up to 1484, and then in 1485 in France. He had almost no affinity apart from a few old Lancastrian nobles for whom he was a last hope. He had few other friends and came from a very poor and not terribly important part of the country.

As we have seen, monarchs with stronger claims and better prospects had all ended up dead. Moreover, at Henry VII's succession in 1485, there remained in play numerous descendants of Edward III and York as claimants to the Crown, some with better claims than Henry. Among these were John de la Pole, Earl of Lincoln, nephew of both Edward IV and Richard III and the latter's designated heir. There was Edward, Earl of Warwick, and his sister, Margaret, Countess of Salisbury, children of the late Duke of Clarence. Later, Henry, Marquis of Exeter, would come into play.

Finally, for the romantically inclined, remember that the bodies of Edward V and Richard, Duke of York, had never been produced. There was no proof that they were actually dead. This led to the 15<sup>th</sup> century equivalent of Elvis sightings. In other words, there was a very good possibility that Henry might

lose his throne to a really good Edward impersonator. That possibility was all the more real because Henry and England had enemies abroad.

First and foremost among them was Margaret, Duchess of Burgundy. She was a sister of Edward IV and Richard III, and she wanted revenge. She was perfectly willing to use Burgundy as a base of operations for anyone who might overthrow Henry VII. As we'll see, the French, Scots, Irish, and even the Holy Roman Emperor might find it in their interest to dislodge Henry. At various times, all these groups would support pretenders to the throne against him.

After all, remember that the rulers of Brittany and France had once protected him. Why would they get out of the habit now? Now that he was on the throne, they might protect somebody else. These facts would dictate many of Henry's policy decisions throughout his reign. They would require a particular kind of personality. The personality of Henry VII has always confused historians a little bit. Unlike his son, he was not a flamboyant man. He kept his cards very close to his chest. He kept his own counsel. This king did not have "Oprah moments." On the one hand, he was in many respects a prototype of a modern Machiavellian ruler before the term was even coined. In fact, in 1494, one observer anticipated Machiavelli by saying, "The king is feared rather than loved."

Henry VII got that way by being shrewd, hardheaded, and capable of sharp practice if it strengthened his position. He was also content to let sleeping dogs lie. Henry VII was not an ideologue. He would do what worked. He didn't hold grudges. He forgot nothing, but he was not given to revenge or vendetta for their own sake—only for a practical purpose. Then he was perfectly capable of being cruel.

His behavior will sometimes remind us of a very practical 21<sup>st</sup> century president or CEO, but Henry was also very much a man of his times, which was the late Middle Ages. For example, he was a loyal son of the Church. He heard two to three masses a day. He founded two convents. He burnt heretics, happily. He built the magnificent Henry VII Chapel at Westminster Abbey, which enshrines his body and those of his Tudor and Stuart descendents.

Finally, he believed in purgatory. Maybe he was concerned with what all that practicality had done to his soul. Anyway, he endowed over 10,000 masses to be said for it. One wonders if they had actually been said by the time his relatives got rid of the mass in England.

Finally, I think his love of ceremony can be interpreted as both medieval and modern. Like Edward IV, he believed that a king must be seen and must be seen to be “God’s lieutenant.” Like Edward, he knew the propaganda value of royal ceremony and artwork. His court sponsored both. As we’ve seen, he wasn’t above blackening the reputation of Richard III by repainting that hunch.

Concern for the ceremonial side of life and belief in the power of ritual are medieval traits, but Henry’s awareness of the importance of propaganda, his cultivation of good public relations, and his willingness to go negative on his enemies as we know only too well are perfectly acceptable signs of a modern political sensibility.

Henry demonstrated his modernity and his practicality almost immediately upon seizing the Crown. I’m going to demonstrate this by going through the various steps he took upon his succession—upon winning the battle of Bosworth Field in 1485. The first thing he did upon his triumphal entry into London was to get himself crowned on 30 October 1485. Then, and only then, did Henry call a Parliament to recognize him and the succession in his line. In other words, he called Parliament and informed them, “By the way, I’m king.” He didn’t want to claim the Crown in Parliament and then run into Henry IV’s problem that Parliament would then feel that he owed the Crown to them.

He did find Parliament useful. Henry used Parliament, encouraging them to ruin, by acts of attainder, the most prominent Yorkist peers and officials. He continued to employ middling officials from the Yorkist government. He did this for a variety of reasons. First, he wanted to keep the government running. He didn’t want there to be a complete breakdown. Second, he wanted to secure their loyalty, and he wanted to deprive Yorkist challengers of a rank and file.

In other words, look at how practical Henry is. He ruins those who can ruin him. He gratifies those who can help him. This is another Tudor trait that we'll see again and again, along with rough wooing.

Later, in 1495, he would sign the De Facto Act, which absolved anyone acting on behalf of a King of England from prosecution. He did this to reassure old Yorkists that he wasn't going to go after them and to reassure his own followers that they would be indemnified under a subsequent reign, but note that he waited 10 years to do it. In other words, he spent 10 years ruining Yorkists, and then he has Parliament pass an act saying, "It's okay, you're safe." Very smart.

Another thing that Henry did upon coming to the Crown was marry Elizabeth of York. Who was Elizabeth of York? She was a daughter of Edward IV. This marriage unites the Lancastrian and the Yorkist claims in the subsequent Tudor line, or as it was usually referred to at the time, the House of Richmond.

Henry had promised to do this before his rebellion—he would marry Elizabeth. But note that he only did it four months after achieving the monarchy. Once again, he doesn't want it to appear that he owes the Crown to Elizabeth. He doesn't want people to think that he had to do that because he needs some Yorkist validation. He waits four months, and then he marries Elizabeth. By now, I hope you've figured out that this man is a master of timing.

At this late date, given Henry's reticence, it's impossible to know how these two people, thrown together by dynastic circumstance and products of, I think we can agree, one of the most dysfunctional families in history, felt about each other. There are no love letters or lots of indications of affection that I know of.

Every other indication is that the marriage was solid. In any case, Henry VII never violated his marriage bed, and so he never confused the Tudor line. It's one of the great ironies of history that his son, Henry VIII, who was so obsessed with the Tudor line, confused it really well.

Politically, the marriage was a great success, not least because it produced eight children, although unfortunately only three outlived Henry. Remember that statistic from an earlier lecture about infant mortality.

In September 1486, Queen Elizabeth gave birth to their first child, a son. Here, even Henry's choice of a name was calculated, and do we doubt it was Henry who picked the name? He named his son Arthur. Could there be a more loaded name in English history for a successor to the throne than Arthur? It's brilliant. Arthur is a symbol of Anglo-Welsh unity. It also pledges a return to the glory days of the English monarchy, whether they were mythical or not.

Finally, in the spring of 1486, Henry VII and his army made a progress to the north, the ancestral stronghold of Richard III and the Yorkists. He did that to show them who was boss. He also managed to arrest the Earl of Warwick on the way. These were wise initial steps, but they were not in themselves enough to ensure peace. Yorkist rebellions were a constant worry.

Since most real Yorkist claimants were inconveniently (if you're Yorkist) in prison or dead, most of these challenges came from imposters. The first important one is a young man named Lambert Simnel. In 1487, a boy named Lambert Simnel, the son of a baker or maybe an organ maker from Oxford (we're not sure), was put forward by the Irish as the imprisoned Yorkist Earl of Warwick. He raised a rebellion.

On May 5, the real Earl of Lincoln, who is one of the Yorkist claimants, joins Simnel in Ireland with 2,000 German mercenary troops helpfully provided by Margaret of Burgundy. There in Ireland, Simnel was first recognized as king by the Lord Deputy of Ireland and its greatest Anglo-Irish landowner, Gerald Fitzgerald, Earl of Kildare.

Let's stop a moment. The Earl of Kildare is Henry VII's Lord Deputy. He shouldn't be recognizing Lambert Simnel as king, but Kildare was always something of a loose cannon. Remember I made the point that these great aristocrats that English kings used to maintain law and order in these outlying areas often became laws unto themselves. There are lots of stories about the Earl of Kildare, one of which is that he was summoned to court to

explain why he had burnt down the Cathedral at Cashel. His reply was, “I’m very sorry, but I had to. You see, I thought the Archbishop was inside.” A perfectly legitimate answer, I’m sure.

Kildare had always liked the Yorkists basically because they had pretty much given him a free reign over Ireland, so putting forth another Yorkist to replace Henry VII made a lot of sense to him. Kildare had Simnel crowned as King Edward VI, and he helped him hold a Parliament. On the 4<sup>th</sup> of June, Simnel, Lincoln, the German mercenaries, and Irish troops landed in Lancashire and began to march south on London.

Maybe because the country was sick and tired of war and “musical crowns,” or maybe because Henry VII was turning out to be a pretty good king, nobody joined the rebellion. No important English peers really had anything to do with it. The rebels were met by a royal army and defeated at East Stoke in Nottinghamshire on 16 June 1487. Conveniently for Henry, Lincoln died in the fight.

This left the problem of what to do with Simnel. He was, after all, just a small boy, so Henry gave him a job in his kitchens as a turnspit. Who says the first Tudor didn’t have a sense of humor?

Henry’s sense of humor would be challenged much more seriously in the mid-1490s by the next young imposter, one Perkin Warbeck. By the way, as I like to remind my students, one of the great advantages of taking English history is that it suggests so many useful names for potential male children. There may be after viewing these lectures all sorts of young Perkins and Lamberts running around as a result—at least that is one of my fondest hopes.

Warbeck was the son of a Flemish government official, and he was apparently a very well-dressed young man. In 1491, as the story goes, he’s walking down the streets of Cork in Ireland and somebody mistakes him for the long-dead Richard, Duke of York, the littlest prince in the Tower. I’ve never quite figured this out: “Oh, there’s a well-dressed young man, he must be a Yorkist claimant to the throne.”

Henry's enemies immediately seized on the mistake. These people included the Earls of Kildare and the Earl of Desmond. Henry later remarked in exasperation, "My lords of Ireland, you will crown apes at last." Margaret of Burgundy jumped on the bandwagon. She coached Warbeck how to act like a Yorkist prince.

So did the rulers of France, Scotland, and the Holy Roman Empire. The Holy Roman Emperor provided troops. The king of Scotland allowed this guy to marry into the Scottish royal family.

Stop and think about this: The remarkable thing about this is that nobody, but nobody (at least nobody at the top), actually believed that this guy was Richard, Duke of York. They're all pushing this scam. Note that they're perfectly willing to completely flout the Great Chain of Being in order to advance their own interests. This is remarkable to me. We had a whole lecture explaining how everybody believed in the Great Chain of Being and you couldn't mess it up, yet here these people are perfectly willing to put forward the son of a Flemish customs official as the next King of England.

Despite his complete lack of legitimacy, Perkin Warbeck managed to raise rebellions in 1495, 1496, and 1497. In the last case, what happened was he heard about a pre-existing rebellion against high taxes in Cornwall. There's a nice irony here: The rebellion was against high taxes that had been raised to fight previous rebellions. Warbeck decides to hijack the rebellion. The rebels consisted of 15,000 men. They were led by a blacksmith, a lawyer, and a disgruntled peer. I've always thought that was kind of a nice combination: a blacksmith, a lawyer, and a disgruntled peer.

The rebels march across south England and they get from Cornwall to Kent, which was quite a ways to march this way, where they were defeated at Blackheath that summer. As for Warbeck, he arrives too late. The rebellion had already left the station when he arrived on 7 September 1497. He was easily arrested.

At first, as with Simnel, Henry shows mercy. It soon emerges that Warbeck and the Earl of Warwick, whom you remember Henry had arrested as early as 1485, were planning something, so he had both of them executed in



1499. This is a king who's perfectly willing to use cruelty when he feels that it's necessary.

Even with this record of success, various members of the Yorkist clan—the de la Pole family—kept trying and trying. Henry kept trying to smoke them out of their continental lairs. No wonder that, as Francis Bacon wrote, Henry's mind was “full of apprehensions and suspicions.”

To his mind, these rebellions demonstrated three things. First, the Yorkist alternative was still a threat. In fact, the Tudors would continue to believe this long after it was not true. You could argue that everything in Tudor history—and indeed, a lot of what will result in Stuart history—boils down to an obsession of fear that the Yorkists or somebody else will come back and take our crowns from our heads. This obsession was not always a positive force in English history.

The second thing that Henry concluded was that he wasn't terribly worried about his people. He did figure out that they were sick of “musical crowns.”

The third thing he concluded was that all of these people had gotten help from abroad. Henry needed foreign friends. He needed to mend his fences with the other rulers of Europe. Once again, Henry's timing is impeccable, because at this stage of European history, every other Renaissance prince has the same problem. They've all got rebellious nobles who are interested in either compassing the Crown or at least destabilizing the Crown. They're all looking for a base, which means that some of them are looking at Henry's country for a base. All of these European rulers need to get together and in effect protect each other—protect the members of the club.

Henry began with France. Recall that there had been over a century of animosity between the two countries and that reopening the Hundred Years' War was always an option for a King of England. In fact, Henry had several options. Remember that the King of France had harbored him in 1485. You will also remember that the Brittons, trying to maintain their independence from France, have also harbored him. Here you have the nobility of Brittany trying to stay independent and the King of France trying to get them to

submit. Henry has both sides to choose from. Some people would regard this as a moral dilemma. Henry regarded it as an opportunity.

He starts with the King of France. He starts by making overtures to Charles VIII, King of France at the time. Charles rebuffs him, so Henry rattles the saber. In 1489, he lends his support to the Brittan nobility. This is the reason that Charles supports Perkin Warbeck, so it's a kind of a tit-for-tat situation. Finally, in 1492, Henry responds by launching an actual invasion, from Calais, of France. This is Henry VII pretending to be Henry V. He isn't interested in conquering French territory. He's not stupid. He knows that France is France and England is England, but this is a way to get the French king's attention and it works.

The French king needed to secure his northern/northeastern flank, because he had designs on Italy. The result was the Treaty of Etaples in 1492. This treaty reestablished trade between the two countries, and Henry even got the French king to pay him a subsidy of £5,000 for 15 years.

Turning to the Holy Roman Empire: Between 1493 and 1496, Henry used all sorts of economic incentives to get the Holy Roman Emperor to recognize his dynasty. He forbade trade with Flanders. He banished Flemish merchants from England. He moved the English cloth *entrepôt* from Antwerp to Calais.

The point I want to make here is that all these things actually hurt English trade. Henry was perfectly willing to do that to secure the dynasty. For the Tudors, the dynasty is more important than anything else that happens.

By the way, this worked. The Holy Roman Emperor eventually became cooperative.

Much more critical to Henry was the need to secure his northern flank in Scotland. Scotland was at this time ruled by the Stuarts. Since the Stuarts are going to play an important role in this course—they give it half of its title—we might as well say something about them and their relationship to the Tudors. The family came originally from Brittany, where they were stewards in the household of the Archbishop of Dol. I guess they were very good at

it. They were invited to Scotland by King David I. In 1158, he gave Walter Fitzalan the title of Royal, or High, Steward of Scotland.

Subsequently, the family married into the family of Robert the Bruce, King of Scotland. When Robert's son, David II, died in 1371, he was succeeded by Robert Stuart as Robert II, who reigned from 1371–1390 and became the founder of the Stuart line of kings. This family survived numerous disasters, internal feuds, minorities, and assassinations to persist as the rulers of Scotland well into the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Henry VII got along well with James III, but James III was assassinated in 1488. The subsequent King of Scotland, James IV, was much less cooperative. James IV, who ruled Scotland from 1488–1513, gave Warbeck valuable support. He allowed Warbeck to marry into the Scottish royal family and to use Scotland as a land base to invade England.

Henry countered by offering a diplomatic marriage of his own. He offered his six-year-old daughter Margaret to James IV in 1495. Of course, a marriage to a six-year-old is a little unseemly. They took awhile to work out the details. Finally, the marriage took place. Margaret was at the ripe old age of 14 by 1503. This marriage in fact worked. It brought peace for as long as Henry reigned. It neutralized the old alliance with France, and it cut off an important ally of any overseas usurper.

It also established the connection between the Tudors and the Stuarts. That connection would eventually result in a descendant of James and Margaret succeeding to the English throne: James VI of Scotland, who would succeed as James I in 1603. I don't know that we can give Henry credit for seeing this far into the future, but certainly we can give him credit for realizing that these two countries have to stop bickering. They have to start uniting. Their interests are the same.

Henry's greatest coup was his alliance with Spain. In the 1480s, Spain's situation was not unlike that of England. After a long period of division and weakness, Spain had just been united under Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castile—yes, that Ferdinand and Isabella. Their marriage took place in 1469.

Still, this was only a personal union. Each part of Spain continued to be loyal to its monarch and to be governed by its own separate bureaucracy. There were even different languages: Castilian, Spanish, and Catalan. The only real unifying influence in Spain was the Roman Catholic Church. It was the Church that had urged the Spanish monarchy to drive out the moors (Spanish Muslims) and to expel the Jews. This event—the *Reconquista*—was the great founding event of the Spanish nation. The reason I need you to understand all that is that it had only just been completed in 1492. In other words, the King and Queen of Spain need friends too. Their country is emerging after a long period of turbulence. I leave it to Spanish historians about the significance of that turbulence. Don't forget too that Spain has the powerful country of France on its northern border. Spain is vulnerable.

In 1489, England and Spain sign the Treaty of Medina del Campo, by which the two countries promise mutual military support against France, trading privileges and the marriage of Henry's son Arthur to Ferdinand and Isabella's daughter, Catherine of Aragon.

The two children were well underage in 1489, which gives both parties time to negotiate, which is wonderfully interesting for historians, because Ferdinand and Henry VII are two of the great, shrewd negotiators in history. Finally, the marriage took place in November 1501. It did so in England amid weeks of festivals, feasts, tournaments, dancing, etc., and well might it. Well might the proud father of the groom be in a festive mood because what had happened to his in-laws between 1489 and 1501? They had discovered the new world thanks to Columbus. Spain was now on the road to becoming a virtual superpower. Henry was marrying into this royal family. Henry's courtship of Spain: Who would have thought in 1489 that Spain would be that useful an ally? It looked like a fabulous piece of prescience and a fabulous success.

Unfortunately, Arthur died just five months later, throwing Henry's whole foreign policy and the Habsburg-Tudor alliance into chaos. Fortunately, or so it seemed at the time, Henry had another son, also named Henry, whom he offered to Catherine. Ferdinand was just as cagey as Henry. He professed cold feet, demanding a return of part of the dowry that he'd sent with Catherine, and indeed the return of Catherine. After all, Spain was now a

superpower. Henry was down to his last heir in the male line. We all know that England didn't have such a great history of stability. Ferdinand was arguing that the Tudors no longer looked like such a good bet. The death in 1503 of Queen Elizabeth, forestalling any further Tudor heirs, further weakened the prospects.

But Henry was no fool. He refused to return the dowry. The negotiations dragged on and on, for years. Ferdinand's own prospects weakened in 1504 when Isabella died. Remember, theirs was a personal union. Ferdinand might lose Castile and go back to being just Ferdinand of Aragon. At one point, he had to compete with his son-in-law, the Archduke Philip of Burgundy, to be regent of Castile. This gives Henry an opportunity. He cozies up to Philip of Burgundy, signs the Treaty of Windsor in 1506, and promises to provide mutual defense. He contemplates a marriage, since Henry himself is now free, to Philip's sister, Margaret of Savoy.

That arrangement would collapse in September 1506, when Philip of Burgundy dies, but that didn't stop Henry. He continued to negotiate all throughout Europe with virtually any crown head he could find for the possibility of a second marriage. One almost has the sense of personal ads: "Single white king, likes long walks on the beach and to crush rebellions."

In the meantime, there's poor old Catherine. Henry has stopped her allowance of £1200 a year. He has deprived her of her household at Durham house. She's basically living on his charity. The whole thing was still up in the air when Henry VII died in April 1509. At the urging of his council, the new king, Henry VIII, cut the Gordian knot and went ahead with the marriage to Catherine.

After a papal dispensation allowing Henry to marry his brother's widow, the most fateful marriage in English history took place on 11 June 1509—more about that—plenty more about that—anon.

In the meantime, it appeared that thanks to Henry VII's shrewd foreign policy, Tudor England was surrounded by the mid-1490s, if not by friends, then by relatives. To some extent, he'd fooled all of his fellow monarchs. They noticed that he'd put down all the rebellions he faced. They also heard

that he was fabulously wealthy. As we'll see in the next lecture, in fact Henry was merely solvent. He wasn't fabulously wealthy. It was just like him to spread the rumor.

In any case, Henry VII's foreign policy, combined with his cultivation of good relations with the Church, ensured that at his death in 1509, England had no significant foreign enemies. In the next lecture, we'll examine what he did to eliminate challengers at home.

# Establishing the Tudor Dynasty: 1497–1509

## Lecture 8

**The popular medieval image of a king is of someone who can make or break another human being—make or break a subject—with the snap of a finger or the flick of an eyelash or eyebrow. In fact, kings didn’t have this kind of power during the Middle Ages and Renaissance. They didn’t have these kinds of resources. They didn’t have the communications across the country that would have enabled this to happen quickly. Still, ... in the words of Sir Thomas Smith, he was, “the life, the head, and authority of all things that be done in the realm.”**

**T**he first point to make about the government headed by Henry VII was that it was small (about 1,500 officials), poor, and limited in its responsibilities. There was no standing army; FBI; IRS; national postal service; Departments of Agriculture, Education, Housing and Urban Development; Medicare; student loans; or similar organizations and programs. The king was at the center of government. He had the power to declare war, raise the militia, summon Parliament, award titles and lands, and grant pardons. The king needed advice on all these matters, which was provided by a council made up of great nobles, department heads, and (after Edward IV) important merchants and professionals. Later under the Tudors, it would evolve into the Privy Council.

The Council deliberated policy at the king’s request. It administered royal lands, taxation, and justice in the localities. It arbitrated disputes among powerful men. It acted as a legal tribunal when it met in Star Chamber. The Council was considered part of the royal household. The royal household was divided into two parts. The *household below stairs*, under the Lord Steward, took care of food, linen, and other domestic needs. The *chamber*, under the Lord Chamberlain, staffed the public rooms and managed ceremonial occasions.

Because it put on pageants and ceremonies and fed and housed hundreds of people, the household tended to be very expensive. It received its funds at the Exchequer. The Exchequer received and dispersed the king’s money

at the direction of the Lord Treasurer. However, because its procedures had become fossilized, Yorkist and early Tudor kings often tended to pass their money through a household officer, the treasurer of the chamber.

The Chancery, under the Lord Chancellor, began as part of the royal household in the Middle Ages, but by the 15<sup>th</sup> century, it was a separate department. It kept the Great Seal, attached to important documents, such as grants of land and titles. It also served as a court of law for equity jurisdiction. Other documents were issued by the keeper of the Privy Seal or the king's secretary (later called the Secretary of State). Other law courts included the King's Bench, for civil and criminal cases involving the Crown; common pleas, for cases in common law; assize courts, on a circuit through the countryside, for capital felonies; quarter sessions in the countryside, for lesser felonies and misdemeanors; borough courts, for lesser disputes in towns; and manor courts, for lesser disputes in the country.

Laws were enacted and funds were voted by Parliament, which was summoned, prorogued (suspended temporarily), or dismissed (implying a new election) at the king's pleasure. Parliament consisted of two houses. The House of Lords consisted of all the male peers, bishops, and important abbots of the realm. The House of Commons consisted of selected landed gentlemen and a few merchants and professionals, representing the counties (two members per), important boroughs, and the universities (Oxford and Cambridge). They were elected by male property owners. Together, the two houses of Parliament voted new taxes, impeached corrupt ministers, and presented petitions, which after debate and successful vote, became bills. These, after three readings and successful vote, became acts, which, if approved by the monarch, became statutes. These statutes were enforced by the king's officers in the countryside. They included the following:

- The Lord Deputy of Ireland and Councils of the North and Wales, consisting of great magnates, maintained the king's authority on these frontiers. Later, the latter would evolve into lords lieutenants for Ireland and each shire.
- Administrators of Crown lands oversaw the royal estates.



- Customs officials collected duties on trade.
- Sheriffs collected taxes, impaneled juries, and raised the militia.
- Justices of the peace enforced the law, investigated crimes, acted as judges for non-capital crimes, regulated the local economy, and reported back to the council.
- Sheriffs and justices of the peace were unpaid. Late-medieval and early-modern kings, therefore, had to rely on their loyalty and good will to get their business done.

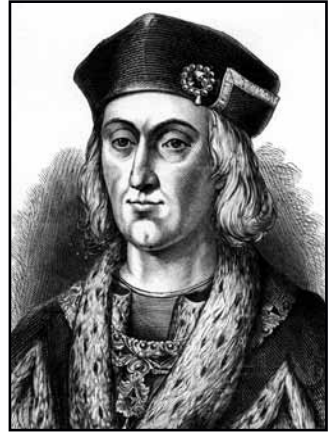
This administration had become corrupt, inefficient, and impoverished under the Lancastrian kings but was revived and reformed by the Yorkists. Henry VII continued and extended those reforms. Having secured his position abroad, Henry sought to make the Crown stronger at home by following three old medieval principles.

**Having secured his position abroad, Henry sought to make the Crown stronger at home by following three old medieval principles.**

- The king must be strong. Henry demonstrated this in a number of ways. He was victorious on the battlefield. He worked hard at the business of being king. He kept the nobility in check. He gave away few lands or titles. He relied on a wide array of advisors, not a few over-mighty subjects. He encouraged Parliament to pass a Statute against Liveries (1487; renewed 1504), which banned private noble armies. He used attainder or the threat of attainder to destroy uncooperative or dangerous noble families, especially Yorkists.
- The king must govern with consent. Henry was careful to secure parliamentary approval for controversial measures. He summoned a large council of 20 to 30 aristocrats, merchants, and professionals for advice. In the countryside, he relied on his justices of the peace (drawn from the gentry), not his nobles, to keep order. Like

Edward IV, Henry promoted court ceremonies, entertainments, and propaganda to maintain the popularity of the regime.

- The king must live of his own (that is, be financially self-sufficient). Unlike the Lancastrian kings, Henry VII was able to live off his “ordinary” revenue (Crown lands, Customs, and so on) without having to ask Parliament to raise “extraordinary” revenue through more taxes. Henry maximized his ordinary revenue in four areas:



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**King Henry VII left his successor—Henry VIII—a full treasury and an efficient government.**

- Crown lands: As king, Henry brought with him Tudor lands and inherited Lancastrian and Yorkist properties. He also revoked grants of land made by previous kings, confiscated the lands of troublesome aristocrats, and made few grants of his own. As a result, the yield from Crown lands nearly doubled.
- Customs: by pursuing peace and trade agreements with other European nations, Henry promoted trade, which increased his yield from Customs.
- Feudal dues: Henry aggressively pursued fines and fees owed to the Crown from its vassals as feudal rights.
- Legal fees: Henry’s more efficient bureaucracy made it possible to exploit fees and fines from legal cases more effectively.

As a result, Henry VII's annual revenue rose from about £91,000 to about £113,000 by the end of the reign. This meant that he had money to pursue his policies and rarely had to call Parliament for emergency taxation.

As a result of these policies, when Henry VII died in 1509, he left his successor a secure throne, a full treasury, an efficient government, and a mostly loyal nation, apart from the grumbling of a humbled nobility. Unfortunately, he left all this to Henry VIII. ■

### Suggested Reading

Bucholz and Key, *Early Modern England*, chap. 1, sec. 2.

Davies, *Peace, Print and Protestantism*, chap. 4.

Guy, *Tudor England*, chaps. 1, 3.

### Questions to Consider

1. What did people expect early Tudor government to do? What did they not expect it to do? How do these lists differ from ours, today?
2. What aspects of Henry VII's program seem medieval and traditional? What aspects seem those of a modern politician?

# **Establishing the Tudor Dynasty: 1497–1509**

## **Lecture 8—Transcript**

In the last lecture, we examined the personality of Henry VII and the steps he took to secure his new throne and his foreign policy. We saw that virtually every action he took in the first decade of his reign was designed to strengthen his position on the throne and to ensure that his family would not be a one-reign wonder.

This lecture will examine Henry VII's domestic policy during the last years of his reign. The principal focus will be on his ruling style and his relationship to the aristocracy and his reforms of the central administration.

This lecture begins with an analysis of the structure and state of English government as inherited by Henry VII. It's a sort of a Cook's tour of the English state that will provide necessary background really for the rest of this course. This will probably not be our most exciting lecture. There won't be any beheadings or rebellions, but it will explain a lot of concepts that I'll be referring to in the next few lectures, like Parliament, the Chancery, and the Exchequer.

The first point to make about the government headed by Henry VII is that it was not nearly so powerful as the governments under which we live. It was rather small (about 1,500 officials at the center). It was poor, and it was limited in its responsibilities. There was no standing army; FBI; IRS; national postal service; Departments of Agriculture, Education, Housing and Urban Development; Medicare; and no loans for deserving students. In other words, people did not expect as much from government in those days as we expect from ours. This is very important to remember.

I think the popular medieval image of a king is of someone who can make or break another human being—make or break a subject—with the snap of a finger or the flick of an eyelash or eyebrow. In fact, kings didn't have this kind of power during the Middle Ages and Renaissance. They didn't have these kinds of resources. They didn't have the communications across the country that would have enabled this to happen quickly.

Still, on the other hand, the king was at the center of government. In the words of Sir Thomas Smith, he was, “the life, the head, and authority of all things that be done in the realm.” In some sense, the whole kingdom and even its inhabitants were his property. Clearly, a strong king set the agenda for his government and to that extent for the country.

In theory, the king had the power to declare war; raise the militia; summon Parliament; award titles and lands (make or break); and grant pardons. To do this, though, he needed advice. This was provided by a council. The Council was made up of great nobles, department heads, and, after Edward IV, important nobles and professionals who actually knew how to get things done.

Because everyone wanted the honor of counseling the king, or at least wanted to be seen to be counseling the king, which may not be the same thing, this body grew in size and eventually became vast and unwieldy. Anyone who’s ever been in big committee meetings knows you can’t actually decide anything.

Late-medieval kings—Henry VII was fond of doing this—would often resort to an inner council of perhaps 10 or fewer trusted advisors. This is not yet a cabinet, because each of these officers doesn’t necessarily have a particular portfolio, but we’re clearly moving in that direction.

What did the Council do? It deliberated policy at the behest of the king. It administered royal lands, taxation, and justice in the localities. It arbitrated disputes between powerful men. That’s one of the reasons that it becomes a sort of court of law. When the Council meets as a court of law, it’s the Court of Star Chamber. This was a necessary outgrowth of this adjudication.

Royal orders that originated in conciliator debate were framed as “orders in council.” The idea behind an order in council is when you get it, you know the king consulted the important people in the realm. I should perhaps explain that kings could issue “proclamations,” which is basically the king merely saying, “This must be so.” They could issue orders in council, which implies a degree of consultation. Or, of course, they also affixed their seal to

“parliamentary statutes,” which implies a greater degree of consultation and is usually a sort of bigger issue.

The Council was considered part of the royal household. All rulers need a household—an entourage to fill their domestic needs, but also to provide an impressive ceremonial setting for the theater of monarchy. These two functions were fulfilled by two major departments in the household. There was the *household below stairs* under the Lord Steward and with the assistance of a board called the “Board of Green Cloth.” Presumably where they met had a green cloth at some point. The Board of Green Cloth and Lord Steward provided the court’s food, linen, fuel, and whatever domestic needs it had. Remember, this isn’t just the king; this is everybody who lives in the palace or has anything to do with government at the center. This was perhaps as many as 1,500 people.

The other great department of the household was the *chamber* under the Lord Chamberlain. This department staffed the public rooms and managed ceremonial occasions of the court.

By the way, it’s an interesting comment on courts that the chamber was usually twice as big as the household below stairs. Here’s the practical folks who provide the food and the linen, but the decorative folks outnumber them. They outnumber them because, of course, the court is a stage. A monarch needs a proper ceremonial setting to appear a monarch. This is something that Henry VI failed to do.

You should think of kings as (to some extent) play-acting. Certainly during the Wars of the Roses, there were various pretenders auditioning for the part. The court, and particularly the chamber, provides the theater of that acting. It was in the splendid halls and galleries as well as the cozy courts and closets of the palace that political business, influence, and intrigue were carried on. It was here that the socially prominent, or those who aspired to be so, hung out in the hopes of being noticed. It was where the leading authors, scholars, artists, and musicians of their day roamed the halls, hoping that they too will be noticed and get their big start in life. We really don’t have an equivalent place in our society where all of these functions and so much opportunity comes together. You can think of the White House or Buckingham Palace,

and they certainly do have a political significance, but they don't have the social or cultural significance of the Tudor Court.

Thus, the chamber included the Chapel Royal and its dean, where the king worshiped and heard the best cathedral choir in England; the great wardrobe, which fashioned his furniture; the robes, which kept his clothing; the jewel house, which kept the Crown and other regalia—all of these offices under their respective master. A century later, Elizabeth would establish a “Master of the Revels” to make sure that her court was properly entertained. In every case, the offices I've just mentioned set the tone of fashion for the entire country.

Nor are we done: The chamber employed numerous gentlemen drawn from every part of the country just to be there—just to provide gentle attendance and maybe occasionally open a door. By the way, one of the things about being royal, or even noble, is you never ever touch a doorknob. Somebody is always there to open the door for you.

Originally, the court's public rooms were just two. There was the hall, where the court gathered to eat. In fact, this was the original nucleus of the court. If you've ever read *Beowulf*, you know that the entire court was just this hall. Eventually, there was also a throne room, called in England the “Presence Chamber.”

Henry VII added to this line-up at both ends. Before the hall, he established a guard chamber, and he established the guard who basically lived there: the “Yeoman of the Guard,” which you can still see at Buckingham Palace today. Remember Bacon saying that Henry was always suspicious and always worried that somebody was going to attack him? He establishes a large palace guard.

But at the other end of the public rooms, he also establishes a room called the “Privy Chamber.” The idea behind the Privy Chamber is that this is where the king can go after he's been in the Presence Chamber and just be alone with a few trusted advisors. That's the theory, of course. The problem with that is that everyone wants to follow “God's lieutenant” into the Privy

Chamber. In 100 years, the Privy Chamber will be one of the public rooms, but you see the idea in the meantime.

Early in the history of English monarchy, the royal household was the government. If the king wanted something done, he had a household servant do it. If he had to store his money somewhere, literally Anglo-Saxon kings stored it under the bed in chests. That's why the word "chamber" is associated both with bedchambers and also with funds. If he wanted to send a message to a foreign court, he sent one of his personal attendants.

By 1485, most of the offices of government had gone out of court. Many of them had established their own bureaucracies and chains of command. As you all know, bureaucracy tends to involve red tape. It tends to get gummed up. We're going to see that kings of England—Henry VII did this—occasionally bypassed the bureaucracy and fell back on their own household servants. You remember a few years back a discussion about government being run out of the basement of the White House? That's the same idea. Sometimes you need to turn to your most trusted advisors to get something done.

Take for example the Exchequer. By 1485, the king's money was collected and distributed from an officer called the "Exchequer," headed by the Lord Treasurer. I should explain that the Exchequer was called the Exchequer because at one point in its history, there had literally been a vast checkerboard. At one end sat the barons of the Exchequer. At the other end, would be some poor sheriff who brought in the money he collected in taxes from his locality. That money would be placed on the checkerboard and moved along rows that stood for hundreds of pounds, shillings, and pence—sort of like shuffleboard.

The reason they did it that way is that that sheriff would have been illiterate. This was the only way he knew if he brought in the proper amount. This is the only way that both sides could in effect audit each other.

As you might imagine, the procedures of the Exchequer were already fairly antiquated and complicated by 1485. Occasionally, Henry VII would resort



to storing the money under his bed or going through his household treasury so that he always had funds at the ready.

By the way, perhaps at this point I should say a little bit about pounds, shillings, and pence. The pound is the standard monetary unit in England. Twenty shillings make up a pound. Twelve pence make up a shilling. You probably want to know what the equivalent would be today, and I just can't do it. Historians notoriously shy away from that sort of comparison. What I can say is that 100 years later, when we have figures, the average amount of money that a poor husbandman or cottager might bring in is going to run about eight shillings a week. If you do the math, that comes to maybe £20 a year? That's £20 a year, compared to a great nobleman, who during that time might make £10,000 a year. That will at least give you an idea of the orders of magnitude.

Similarly with the Chancery: that is to say the Chancery started off with one function and ended up having another. The Chancery under the Lord Chancellor started out as the king's secretariat and archive. The Lord Chancellor kept the Great Seal of England, which was attached to important documents like statutes, borough charters, grants of lands, and titles. The Chancery also served as a court of law. Because land always involves legal problems, eventually it developed into a law court—a "court of equity." That is, the Court of Chancery took cases in which a strict application of the law might lead to injustice. A court of equity is a court that has a little bit of elbow room.

For that reason, the Lord Chancellor, usually a bishop, was called the "keeper of the king's conscience."

Most of the routine paperwork of government had actually moved out of the Chancery by 1485. An awful lot of it was taken by the "Privy Seal office." The Privy Seal was attached to appointments and pensions. There was also a king's secretary. He would later evolve into the secretary of state, who would much later than 1485 carry around an even more flexible seal called a "signet ring," which would be attached to royal letters.

We should run through the other law courts. In London, there was the King's Bench for civil and criminal cases involving the Crown. There was also the "court of common pleas" for cases in the "common law." Common law was the body of law that had evolved out of custom and precedent. It wasn't written down. It wasn't statute law. Where it was written down was in the precedence of previous decisions of the court of common pleas.

In the countryside, there were circuit "assize courts," which went from county-to-county to hear major felonies. Below them were "quarter sessions," meeting four times a year in which JPs got together to adjudge lesser felonies and misdemeanors. There were "borough courts" and "manor courts" for misdemeanors and minor disputes. We talked about the manor court in a previous lecture.

There were also "ecclesiastical courts" for moral offences like blasphemy, drunkenness, and fornication. We'll talk about those in a subsequent lecture, because these are Church matters. They don't really fit here.

For now, I want to make a couple of points about these courts. One is that a lot of the minor courts that we've described, like borough courts and manor courts, are staffed by local landowners who have no specific legal training. Just by virtue of being a landowner, they're thought to be fit to be a judge.

Another point to make is that the jurisdictions among these courts were very fluid. You had a choice of taking your case to this court or another court, which means a lot of competition. Add to that one more fact: The officers of these courts—judges and lawyers—were not paid a set salary. They were paid by fees paid by the litigants. The amount of fee to pay was up to what the officers wanted to ask and what the litigants wanted to pay. Do you see where I'm going with this? The potential for bribery was immense.

You may remember the famous scene in *A Man for All Seasons* where Thomas More accepts a cup from a woman, and then she complains that he actually judged against her. In other words, her complaint was that he was the one honest judge in all of England.

Laws were enacted and funds were voted by Parliament. Parliament met at the king's pleasure. Only he could summon it. By summoning it, that meant that he was calling for new elections. Only he could "prorogue" it—that is, postpone or interrupt its meeting. Only he could dismiss it—that is, send it home permanently. In other words, if you prorogue a Parliament, the same people will come back when you summon them. If you dismiss a Parliament, they all go home and we hold new elections.

Given the fact that Parliament could petition the king for redress of grievance and given the fact that it could impeach his ministers, you might ask, "Why would a king ever call Parliament? In fact, why did they come up with this institution?" As I pointed out in a previous lecture, it was invented by kings.

One reason is that kings were always short of money. It was already a longstanding and very important custom of the English Constitution that only Parliament could approve taxation. In fact, it was more specific than that: Only the House of Commons could approve taxation. The House of Lords was not allowed to veto a money bill coming out of the Commons. That custom is evolving in 1485. It will be very secure by the early 16<sup>th</sup> century.

Another reason that kings wanted to call Parliament is that if they were pursuing a controversial policy, they might want the appearance of consent. They might want to air it in front of Parliament, but not because they're interested in advice. What they were probably interested in was getting Parliament to offer an address, resolution, or statute saying, "Please do this, your majesty. We think it's a good idea."

Still, for the reasons offered above, medieval Parliaments were not very frequent. Kings didn't like to call them. In fact, calling a Parliament is usually considered something of a failure. Parliament met on average 24 days a year under the Yorkists, and 18 days a year under Henry VII. My argument here is that historians are now reluctant to think of Parliament as even a permanent part of the Constitution. It's an occasional part of the Constitution, to be summoned almost in a time of emergency. We'll talk about that in a few moments.

How does Parliament actually work? There are two houses. There's the upper house, or House of Lords, in which sit all the peers of the realm as well as bishops and important heads of monasteries (they'll go in the 1530s). This is about 110 people in 1485. The lower house, or House of Commons, may seem much more representative of the people, but I have to remind you of a few facts here that will prove that it isn't. Firstly, it's true that every shire in England gets two MPs. Theoretically, every borough (city) in England also gets two MPs, but the list of boroughs was being fossilized at this time. By 1600 (in 100 years), there will be all sorts of towns that are growing that don't get an MP, and all sorts of towns that are shrinking that do.

My favorite example of this is Old Sarum. By the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Old Sarum was basically a vacant lot in Hampshire. Old Sarum was the previous site of the city of Salisbury. But it retained its MPs, which meant that anyone who owned this plot of land owned two MPs. They were said to be in his pocket, hence the term "pocket borough."

Another reason the House of Commons wasn't really very representative is that there was a property qualification to get in—you had to own £40 of land, which basically meant you had to be a gentleman—and there was a property qualification to vote. You had to own at least £2 of land, which basically meant you had to be a yeoman. Don't think of the House of Commons as representing everybody.

One more thing about how members of Parliament were picked. Since I just talked about a vote, you probably expect that they were elected. You need to understand that before about 1640, parliamentary elections rarely involved contests. That is, you would rarely have two men competing against each other. Rather, what happened was that the local elite got together somewhere in a castle, country house, or tavern, and they'd say, "Bill, you haven't been to London lately. You're our man."

Then, all of the landowners would leave, and they would instruct their tenants how to vote. This was an age before the secret ballot. Landlords had an awful lot of power to force their tenants to vote the way they wanted. For that reason, the historian Mark Kishlansky refers to "parliamentary selection" instead of "parliamentary election."

In short, both houses reflected the goals of that upper 0.5 percent of the population.

What actually happened in Parliament? Members of Parliament could bring petitions to redress grievances. This might be a policy of the king you want changed. It might be that you want to build a bridge in Shropshire. The petition was given a reading. If approved, it would be engrossed as a bill. The bill was then given three more readings. It had to pass each one of these. If it made it through, then it was sent to the other house, which could also read the bill. If it made it through that other house, it was submitted to the king as an act.

The king could veto a parliamentary act, in which case it did not become a statute. It did not become a law. There was no overriding a royal veto. By the way, this is still in the arsenal of the English monarch. Queen Elizabeth II is allowed to veto bills, but no English monarch has done it since 1708, so she's unlikely to try at this late date.

Once a law was passed, it had to be enforced. Radiating out from the center of government at Westminster were the king's subjects, spread over 50 English and Welsh counties, many of them hundreds of miles away from London. The king has no standing army, so how is he going to get people to obey his statutes, proclamations, and orders in council? He relies on the nobles and gentlemen of England. The most important thing you have to understand about them is that they're very largely unpaid; they're doing it for the honor.

They might serve on the Council of the North or the Council of Wales, great magnates whose job it is to maintain peace in this part of the country. Later, these great magnates will evolve into lords lieutenants for each county in the realm. That will happen in about 100 years.

Below this level, there were administrators of Crown lands, customs officials, and sheriffs who collected taxes, empanelled juries, and raised the militia. Above all were the JPs: justices of the peace. They were local gentlemen who enforced the law, investigated crimes, acted as judges in non-capital cases, and regulated the local economy. The JP could say how

much the price of bread was supposed to be. His job was to maintain order and that might mean getting people fed. In addition, he reported everything back to the Council. That's how the king knows what's going on.

The crucial fact you must remember is that these people are unpaid. Stop and think about what that means. Let us say that the king proposes some policy that is going to hurt my local interests and those of my neighbors. This is where I live here in Hampshire. What am I going to do? Am I going to do the king's bidding or am I going to ignore him? Under Henry VI, they often ignored him.

Henry VII wants to make sure that doesn't happen. He did that not so much by enacting a lot of domestic reforms, but rather by following three old principles of medieval kingship. The principles are: The king must be strong; the king must govern with consent; and the king must live of his own (he must live within a budget).

First, the king must be strong. I think we can agree that Henry VII had done a pretty good job of proving this already. He had won the Crown through force of arms. He had put down all of those rebellions. Above all, he proves it by keeping the nobility in check. He does this by giving away few lands and titles. Unlike Henry VI, he didn't give the store away. He does this by relying on a wide array of advisors instead of a few great nobles like Edward IV did.

He does this by encouraging Parliament to pass a Statute against Liveries in 1487 and renewed in 1504. That statute bans private noble armies. In other words, from the reign of Henry VII, it's illegal to have an affinity. It's illegal to have an army of your own. This is obviously meant to forestall rebellion. It means great nobles will still have lots of clients, but now they're going to have to get them jobs at court, underneath the king.

Henry rules strongly by using attainder, or the threat of attainder, to destroy uncooperative or rebellious families. Another thing that he came up with was something called the "recognizance." Let's say that you've crossed Henry, but he doesn't want to destroy you completely. What you do is you enter a bond with him for a certain amount of money—usually an immense sum of

money: £5,000. The king keeps it for a rainy day: “You cross me again, I’ll collect the bond.”

Henry loved to do this. By the end of his reign, he had something like three-quarters of the English nobility filing bonds with him. No wonder one of his advisors said, “He likes to have many persons in his danger at his pleasure.”

The second principle of medieval kingship is that the king must govern with consent. Henry did what he could to ensure that it looked like he was governing with consent. He secured parliamentary approval—note he does use Parliament for acts of attainder, the Statute against Liveries, and the De Facto Act we talked about in the last lecture. He also summons a large council of 20 to 30 aristocrats. This satisfies a lot of people, but when he actually wants to make a decision, he closets with a very small group of people.

I should perhaps explain at this point an expression I’ve used twice. In the Renaissance, the term “closet” didn’t mean where you kept your clothes; it was your office. It was a very private room where you met with your choicest advisors, in this case merchants and lawyers like Sir Edmund Dudley, Sir Reginald Bray, and Sir Richard Empson. These men made the real decisions.

Similarly, in the countryside, instead of relying on a great peer to maintain control, Henry liked to use the JPs. It’s the same principle as being nice to the middling Yorkist officials. No individual JP can be a problem for Henry; no individual JP is powerful enough. But together, they can be very helpful to him.

Like Edward IV, Henry also promoted court ceremonies. I would argue that a king who is seen and a king who goes out amongst his people is one who at least appears to care what they think. Here’s another example of the king governing with consent.

Finally, the king must live of his own. Theoretically, the king had two kinds of revenue. There was “ordinary” revenue. That was the revenue from his lands, their rents and their produce. There was the Customs. There was all the revenue that sort of came with being king. Then there was “extraordinary”

revenue. Extraordinary revenue is revenue voted on an emergency basis, at least in theory, by Parliament.

You may remember that the Lancastrian kings had squandered their ordinary revenue on the Beauforts. As a consequence, they had to call Parliament all the time. They'd also, by the way, wrecked their trade and so depressed their Customs yields. They'd given away lots of land, so they had very little ordinary revenue. We talked about £30,000 pounds a year. They had to rely on Parliaments to vote extraordinary sums.

The idea behind a parliamentary subsidy is that it's supposed to happen in a time of emergency. As you know, the reign of Henry VI had been one long emergency, and the English taxpayer is fed up with it. Henry VII knew that this had to stop. He had to bring his ordinary revenue up so that he wouldn't have to call a Parliament, which by the way meant that he wouldn't have to hear about all their grievances. This was a good idea for him.

He concentrated on four sources of ordinary revenue. First, Crown lands: As king, Henry brought in all the land from the Lancastrian and Yorkist claims that he now inherited. He revoked grants of land by previous kings. He confiscated the lands of troublesome aristocrats, and he was careful not to grant any further land of his own. As a consequence, by 1504, he'd raised his landed revenue from £29,000 a year to £42,000.

Turning to the Customs, he pursued peace and trade agreements with other European nations, and this sent his Customs revenues up from £33,000 a year to £41,000 a year.

His third source of revenue was feudal dues. Henry pursued aggressively money that was due to him because he was, after all, the chief landlord of England—money due from his feudal vassals. He raised this head from £343 a year to £6,000 a year by 1507.

Finally, he aggressively pursued legal fees. He also was not above accepting money from the King of France as we saw, or investing in a trading voyage, or even extorting loans or benevolences from his nobles.



As a result, Henry VII's annual ordinary revenue rose from £91,000 a year early in the reign to £113,000 a year by 1502. Remember, Henry VI's had been only £30,000 a year. As a result, Henry VII rarely had money problems and therefore rarely had to call Parliament for emergency taxation. All of this made Henry VII successful and secure, if neither popular nor loved.

As a result of his policies, when Henry VII died in 1509, he left his successor a secure throne, a full treasury, an efficient government, and a mostly loyal nation, apart from the occasional grumbling of a humbled nobility. Unfortunately, he left all of those things to his son, Henry VIII.

# Young King Hal: 1509–27

## Lecture 9

**The new king's flash was perhaps just what the country needed after the rather dour, sober, and miserly reign of Henry VII. As we shall see, that flash went a long way but it could not forever obscure the darker side of Henry's nature. Underneath the flamboyant exterior, beat a heart that was every bit as cold and calculating, and a great deal more self-absorbed, than that of Henry VII.**

**T**he personality of Henry VIII was larger than life. As a result, he was very popular in his own day, but he is not easy for historians to pin down. The most important result of Henry's larger-than-life personality is that it tempts us to reduce what is arguably the single most important event in English history—the Reformation—to a consequence of the whims and passions of one man. But history is always more complicated than that.

In his early years, Henry VIII was almost universally admired. He was good-looking. He was proficient in riding, hunting, wrestling, and dancing. He was intelligent and learned: He spoke or read Greek, Latin, French, Italian, and Spanish. He corresponded with More and Erasmus. He wrote a treatise against Luther for which he was named *Difensor Fidei* (Defender of the Faith). He wrote music and played the lute, organ, and virginals. He was flamboyant. His court sponsored tournaments and pageants, festivals and revels, and progresses through the country.

With hindsight, historians and some shrewd contemporaries have noted a darker side to Henry's nature. He was cold and calculating. He was high strung and impulsive. He was lazy, greedy and supremely self-centered. He was disloyal to wives, friends, and advisors and incapable of taking responsibility for failure. These qualities go far to explain why Henry rejected, imprisoned, and condemned to death two queens, one bishop, numerous courtiers, and nearly every single principal advisor who ever served him.

For the first two decades of the reign, the good qualities came to the fore, apart from Henry's laziness. The king lived the life of a playboy with the gentlemen of his Privy Chamber. He left the running of the country to his principal advisor, Thomas, Cardinal Wolsey. Between 1513 and 1530, Cardinal Wolsey dominated Henry's government. Though highly intelligent and supremely competent, he has been called the most hated man ever to hold high office in England. Why?

Wolsey was an upstart, the son of a butcher who had risen to high rank. His power was resented by those better born than he. Wolsey was a corrupt churchman who lived like a lay prince. That is, Wolsey was a pluralist. At any given time, he was a cardinal, was Archbishop of York, held at least one other major bishopric and numerous smaller livings, and he was papal legate, the pope's personal representative. Wolsey was thus an absentee, given that he could not be resident in all of his livings at once.

Wolsey monopolized power in the church; these positions made him virtual head of the Church in England. Wolsey was a nepotist who found positions in the church for his children, fathered in violation of his vows of celibacy. Wolsey was fabulously wealthy owing to these various posts. At his height, he made £35,000 a year, equal to a third of the royal revenue. He built two magnificent palaces— Hampton Court, Surrey, and York Place (later Whitehall), Westminster—more luxurious than anything the king had. He endowed Cardinal College (later Christ Church), Oxford. He ate well and dressed sumptuously. Thus he was resented both by those who would reform the church and those who were kept out of the places he monopolized.

Wolsey was a corrupt government minister who monopolized civil power. He was Lord Chancellor, chief legal officer of the nation. His appointees and clients served as Lord Privy Seal, Secretary of State, and so on. This meant that nothing happened in Henry's government without Wolsey's knowledge. Despite his other faults, Wolsey was a fair judge in the courts of Chancery and Star Chamber. In particular, he looked out for the rights of ordinary people against their landlords. But Wolsey was resented by other, less powerful ministers and by members of the aristocracy stung by his judgments.

Finally, Wolsey was chief favorite, which always breeds resentment. The only way to get to Henry was through Wolsey. Virtually the only way to secure a government job was through Wolsey. Disappointed office-seekers and would-be favorites blamed him for their failures.

Wolsey's biggest failing was that he sometimes forgot that all his power depended on the king. Specifically, Wolsey would retain power only so long as Henry remained lazy and Wolsey was able to satisfy his demands. For the first 20 years of Henry's reign, those demands centered on his conduct of war and foreign policy. Henry and Wolsey pursued an aggressive European foreign policy, each of them in support of the other's complementary agenda. Henry fought because he was young, male, and anxious to win glory on the battlefield; he had his father's Treasury surplus to play with; he wanted to do something to please the nobility after his father's strict rule; and he wanted to reestablish England's European empire. Wolsey supported Henry's fights because he wanted to please the king and he wanted to be the diplomatic arbiter of Europe with a view to, possibly, becoming pope.

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**Henry and Wolsey pursued an aggressive European foreign policy, each of them in support of the other's complementary agenda.**

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In fact, these goals were hopelessly unrealistic. Europe was dominated by two great rivals, both far wealthier and more powerful than Henry's England: France, ruled by the Valois, and the Holy Roman Empire (most of Central Europe and, after 1519, Spain and the Spanish Empire), ruled by the Habsburgs. They would mainly clash over control of Italy, which reduced England's strategic importance.

Henry's wars were fought in four stages. Between 1511 and 1514, Henry allied with the Holy Roman Empire against France and Scotland. He achieved some success: In 1513, the Scots were defeated at Flodden; in 1514, Henry captured Tournai, in France. But the war cost £650,000, exhausting Henry VII's treasury. Between 1515 and 1520, Henry's situation deteriorated. He was out of money. France was ruled by a new, young, aggressive king, Francis I. He rejected Henry's proposal for a diplomatic marriage with the latter's sister, Princess Mary. He also encouraged a rebellion in Scotland

against Henry's other sister, Queen Margaret. Wolsey's strenuous diplomatic efforts to bring peace to Europe failed. Between 1521 and 1525, Henry allied with the Holy Roman Empire's new, young, aggressive emperor, Charles V, once more against France. Henry landed in France, burnt a few villages, ran out of money, and went home. Charles won a tremendous victory over the French, capturing Francis I, at Pavia in 1525. Henry, hoping to capitalize on this, asked Wolsey to raise money for another campaign, but Parliament refused the Amicable Grant. Without the dowry the Amicable Grant would have provided, Charles refused to marry Henry's daughter, Princess Mary. Between 1525 and 1528, Henry and Wolsey switched to the French side. They were fed up with Charles V's disregard for English interests. They wanted to rescue Pope Clement VII from Charles, who had sacked Rome and taken him into custody in 1527. Henry wanted to free Clement because he wanted the Pontiff to grant him a divorce from Catherine of Aragon, Charles's aunt!

Henry's wars produced four results, none of them good for England. They drained the English Treasury. Henceforward, the King of England would be chronically short of money. They increased popular resentment of high taxes and their perceived author, Cardinal Wolsey. They discredited Wolsey with the king. Neither his diplomacy nor his parliamentary management had achieved the desired results. They demonstrated that England was, at this point, at best a second- or third-rate military power. All these lessons would affect the next great issue of the reign, what contemporaries called "The King's Great Matter." ■

### Suggested Reading

Bucholz and Key, *Early Modern England*, chap. 1, secs. 3–5.

Guy, *Tudor England*, chap. 4.

Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII*, chaps. 1–6.

### Questions to Consider

1. Why did the personality of Henry VIII so captivate contemporaries? Why does it continue to captivate us today?

2. As the “brains behind the operation,” Cardinal Wolsey was far less popular than his master. Are favorites and principal advisors usually more or less popular than their employers? Why should this be so? What role does a favorite or principal advisor play in the state?

# Young King Hal: 1509–27

## Lecture 9—Transcript

In the last two lectures, we addressed the cool, calculating personality of the first Tudor, Henry VII, and his careful strategies for establishing his line on the English throne. This lecture addresses the larger-than-life personality of his son, Henry VIII, and the early years of his reign. Those years were dominated by the administration of Cardinal Wolsey and a series of European wars. This lecture concludes by explaining why Henry's wars were ultimately wasteful and futile.

If ever a king captured the public imagination, it was Henry VIII. Surely, it's his image, cocksure and truculent astride one of Holbein's canvasses (to quote his best biographer, JJ Scarisbrick) that we conjure up in our minds when we imagine a king. Here was a man who was truly in every way larger than life. That had two results. First, he was very popular in his own day, and he remains so in ours. I imagine that he's one of the reasons that you signed up for this course.

Second, he's never been easy for historians or the general public to assess soberly. Almost five centuries after his reign, those who grew up in the 20<sup>th</sup> century will have difficulty separating the historical image from those created in our mind's eye by the likes of Charles Laughton, Robert Shaw, Richard Burton, Keith Michael, and even Benny Hill. To a greater or lesser extent, that image is of a vain and corpulent lecher—eating, wenching, and executing his way through marriage after marriage, ministry after ministry, and religious settlement after religious settlement.

Like most popular historical orthodoxies, this one does contain a grain of truth. Henry's appetites and his capacity to cast others aside were enormous. But it contains an awful lot of distortion as well, for it reduces what is arguably the single most important event of this course—the one out of which most of the rest of the course flows, namely the English Reformation—to the product of a single man's foibles and passions. That may be an acceptable interpretation for the movies, but we're made of sterner and more critical stuff. As we shall see, the truth is at once more subtle, more complicated, and a lot more interesting.

Henry VIII's contemporaries were almost universally impressed with him, at least at first. And why not? He had many good qualities. He was good-looking and muscular, at least before all those appetites turned him into a gouty and syphilitic hulk. He was athletic and loved riding, hunting, falconry, wrestling, and dancing.

Henry was much more than a royal jock. He was highly intelligent and very learned. He spoke or read Latin, French, Greek, Italian, and Spanish. He corresponded with Erasmus and More, befriending the latter. He wrote a treatise defending the seven sacraments against Luther, the *Assertio Septem Sacramentorum*. As with JFK's *Profiles in Courage*, there's always been a controversy about authorship: did Henry really write it? Did More write it? More always claimed that he was nothing more than a research assistant.

In any case, the pope was so impressed and grateful that he named Henry *Difensor Fidei* (Defender of the Faith) in 1521, a move that subsequent popes would come to regret.

Henry played the lute, the organ, and the virginals. He composed masses, anthems, and songs. One of his anthems is still in the active repertoire of English cathedral choirs.

When not writing or composing himself, he patronized professional artists and musicians, men like Hans Holbein, the portraitist; and Thomas Tallis, the composer of Church music; and William Cornysh, who was a polymath: playwright, composer, actor, and singer.

Henry was generous to his friends and charming to his acquaintances. He was also flamboyant. Early in the reign especially, his court sponsored tournaments and pageants in which he participated, unlike his father. Henry VII knew the importance of tournaments and pageants, but he always presided. He never got down there in the dirt. He never got on a horse and actually attempted to unseat another rider.

The court provided festivals and revels for New Year's Day, Epiphany, Shrovetide, and the king's return at the end of the summer, as well as Christmas.



So where did Henry go all summer? He went on stately progress through the country. His court was a moveable feast migrating about among the 60 or so residences that he built or acquired during his reign. These included Westminster Palace, which suffered a fire in 1514 that made it less than livable (it's another reason Henry had to move around); Whitehall and Hampton Court, both acquired in 1529; and Greenwich; Richmond; Nonesuch; Oatlands; etc. When Henry got bored with a place, he just moved on to another. As you will figure out, Henry got bored a lot.

There were other reasons for moving about. One was that the 300–400 people of his retinue would fairly quickly—say within three months—overwhelm the primitive sewage facilities of these palaces. Literally, you couldn't stay in one palace all year long. You had to keep moving around so that the cleaning crew could come in and clean up the mess.

Henry also knew the value of showing his face to as many of his subjects as possible. Again, I remind you: This is an age before newspapers. This is an age before television. People didn't see the king's face all the time.

Finally, as I indicated, Henry easily grew bored and restless, and not just with places. That last point should give us pause, but in general, the new king's flash was perhaps just what the country needed after the rather dour, sober, and miserly reign of Henry VII. As we shall see, that flash went a long way but it could not forever obscure the darker side of Henry's nature. Underneath the flamboyant exterior, beat a heart that was every bit as cold and calculating, and a great deal more self-absorbed, than that of Henry VII. Henry VIII was emotional, brooding, impulsive, greedy, high-strung, consummately self-centered, unbelievably sure of himself.

At this point, you may reply, "The man was a king, after all." Remember, though, that he was only the second king of his line. He was the occupant of a throne that had only recently been very insecure. These qualities made him utterly disloyal to wives, friends, and advisors. He was incapable of taking responsibility for any of the failures of his reign.

On the second day of the reign, he arrested and would eventually execute two of his father's most trusted advisors, Edmund Dudley and Sir Richard

Empson. Henry did this to show that he was breaking with his father's past and that these men who had so hounded the aristocracy—remember those bonds and recognizances we learned about?—he was going to get rid of them. He wasn't going to treat the aristocracy as his father had done. This was the dawn of a new day.

It was indeed, in ways that Henry didn't anticipate. The judicial murder of Empson and Dudley foreshadowed the tone of the next 38 years. Over the next few years, Henry VIII would indeed treat his aristocracy better en masse. He would cancel 45 bonds that his father had imposed upon them. But he was utterly cynical and disloyal towards all sorts of people: royal servants and virtually anyone else that he relied on at any given time. In fact, in ways that Henry did not intend, the execution of Empson and Dudley would set a tone. Over the next 40 years, he would reject, imprison, and behead two queens, one bishop, numerous courtiers, and nearly every single principal advisor who ever served him, with the bare exception of Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk.

You may remember Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk. He appears in Robert Bolt's play, *A Man for All Seasons*. He's a friend of Thomas More. Despite being a consummate "yes man" and timeserver, Norfolk ends up in the Tower of London on the night before Henry's death. In fact, he was to be executed the next day. The only thing that saved Norfolk was that Henry died before he did. Virtually every single minister ends up here.

As with ministers, so, of course, with wives. Where Henry VII had remained faithful to Queen Elizabeth, Henry VIII pursued more than one extramarital affair during his marriage to Catherine and produced at least one illegitimate child and possibly more, thus muddying the succession.

For the first two decades of the reign, only Henry's good qualities came to the fore. The new king and queen got along well, in part because she gave him his freedom. Henry played at tournaments and hung out with the boys—the gentlemen of his Privy Chamber. They spent their days and nights hunting, gaming, drinking, and occasionally whoring. This led one observer to remark in 1515 that the new king "is a youngling who cares for nothing but girls, hunting, and wastes his father's patrimony."

This should cause us to ask the question: “Who was running the country?” At first, Henry was content to let his father’s advisors run the country while he played, with the exception of course of Empson and Dudley, who were inconvenienced by death. As they began to retire or die off, a new minister came to the fore: Thomas Wolsey, soon to be cardinal and Archbishop of York.

Cardinal Wolsey would dominate the government and politics of England for the next two decades. Though highly intelligent and supremely competent, Wolsey has been called the most hated man who ever held high office in England. Who was this man? Why was he hated so much?

Wolsey was born in 1473. He was a poor boy who made good. He was the son of a butcher from Ipswich. As a young man, he won a poor boys’ scholarship to Oxford. He went there with the intention of entering the priesthood.

At this point, perhaps I should point out—and this will explain an awful lot about the Early-modern Roman Catholic Church—that going into the clergy—entering the priesthood—was not necessarily a decision made in pursuit of a vocation. It was a career move. There were very few things that a poor boy could do, even with an Oxford degree. Going into the Church was one of them and probably the best option for Wolsey.

His intelligence and capacity eventually won him notice at court. He became chaplain to the Archbishop of Canterbury and then to the king. At the beginning of the new reign, he was named royal almoner, which means that he was in charge of distributing the king’s charity.

Henry VIII wasn’t all that interested in charity. He was interested in war, and he noticed Wolsey’s obvious ambition and organizational abilities, so he gave him an assignment to help Henry plan a foreign campaign in France in 1512–1514. We’ll talk about that campaign more in a few moments. In the meantime, Wolsey’s performance was brilliant. It won him the Archbishopric of York on the recommendation of the king. In 1514, it won him a cardinal’s hat from the pope, who had allied with Henry against the French the following year.

Henry likes him. The pope likes him. Why doesn't anybody else like him? First, remember that Wolsey was an upstart. He was resented because he rose to high rank from low birth. Of course, anyone who had high birth resented him for it. It violated the Great Chain of Being.

Second, Wolsey was a corrupt churchman who lived like a lay prince. That is, first Wolsey was a pluralist. At any given time, he was a cardinal, Archbishop of York, holder of at least one major additional bishopric and numerous smaller livings at the same time. For example, in addition to being Archbishop of York, he was Abbot of St. Albans and Bishop of Bath from 1518. In 1524, he traded Bath for the wealthier seat of Durham. In 1529, he traded Durham for the even wealthier Winchester.

He was also papal legate, which means that he was the pope's personal representative in England. Since these seats and livings are widely scattered about the country, it was obvious that Wolsey would be an absentee. He couldn't minister or oversee any of these dioceses, really. He spent all of his time in London. This offended Church leaders who wanted reform.

Wolsey also monopolized power in the Church. These positions made him the virtual head of the Church of England. By holding so many positions, Wolsey kept other able men out of them. Worse, he used his power to find positions in the Church for his own children, fathered, of course, out of wedlock in violation of his priestly vows of celibacy.

Worse still, as papal legate, Wolsey and the Church got used to calling all the shots without consulting with Rome, the king, or the Archbishop of Canterbury, who technically would have been a superior to Wolsey. This weakened the Church's leadership on the eve of the Reformation. Church leaders forgot how to work collectively. If Wolsey ever went away, there would be a vacuum at the top.

Moreover, notice that this also proves that the Church of England could be run very well from London without any reference to Rome.

These various posts made Wolsey fabulously wealthy. Bishoprics and abbeys had vast landed estates attached to them, the income from which

went to the bishop or the abbot. Moreover, some churchmen, including Wolsey, sold subordinate Church offices, a practice condemned by the Church's simony.

At his height, Cardinal Wolsey made £35,000 a year. Let's put that in context: His nearest noble rival made £8,000 a year. The king—the royal government—only made £110,000 a year. Note £35,000 to £110,000: we can talk about the super rich, but I think I'm correct in saying that there is no one on this planet who makes a third of the revenue of the United States or even the British government, but that's what Wolsey did. Wolsey made a third of the revenue of the English state just by himself.

Moreover, Wolsey liked to display his wealth. He ate well. He dressed magnificently. He proceeded through the streets of London pompously. He built two magnificent palaces: Hampton Court in Surrey, and York Place (later Whitehall) at Westminster.

Wolsey was also generous. He founded Cardinal College, Oxford, in part so that other poor boys could go to Oxford and make good. It's important to keep all of this in perspective. Remember that if Wolsey had been an Italian cardinal, nobody would have noticed. This was a fairly typical display in the Renaissance, but in England it stuck out like a sore thumb, especially given the poverty of most of the English priesthood at the time. This display did not sit well with priestly status, his humble origins, the great poverty of the mass of the country, or eventually the king's jealousy.

To sum up how churchmen felt about Wolsey, he was seen by members of his own profession as a simonist, a nepotist, a fornicator, a materialist, and an aggrandizer of power. He was detested both by those who would reform the Church and those who wanted his jobs.

Wolsey was also a corrupt government minister who monopolized civil power. In 1515, he was named Lord Chancellor of England, the chief legal officer of the realm and the keeper of the Great Seal. This meant, as we have seen, that no statute, grant of land, or charter could be made without his cooperation. He also appointed the keeper of the Privy Seal and the king's secretaries. There was no information that passed through to the king that

Wolsey didn't know about. Indeed, it could be argued that all the decisions were made by Wolsey. Of course, even though the ultimate decision was supposed to be made by Henry, it was Wolsey who lined up all the dots and made sure that Henry only had the facts that Wolsey considered to be appropriate.

By aggrandizing so much power, Wolsey virtually destroyed the Council as a decision-making body, though he elevated it as the Court of Star Chamber. Wolsey used the power of Star Chamber to investigate illegal retaining, profiteering in the grain trade, enclosure, and vagrancy. Note that he could argue that with most of those initiatives, he was defending the commonwealth and above all the common people—the little people—in attacking enclosure and making sure that the price of grain was reasonable.

In fact, Wolsey was a fair judge in the courts of Chancery and Star Chamber. He prided himself on giving justice to the little people, but of course, that only tended to offend the big people more. His reputation for fair justice also meant that litigants flocked to his courts, Star Chamber and Chancery, for all sorts of cases involving property, contract, perjury, libel, and forgery. This means that other courts are neglected. Do you remember me telling you that all these courts compete with each other and that the lawyers and judges of those courts rely on fees? Here's another group of people that Wolsey has offended: lawyers and judges.

If Wolsey was a fair and impartial judge, he was known to be a corrupt administrator who accepted bribes and sold civil as well as Church offices.

To sum up Wolsey's role in government, he was resented by other, less powerful ministers, by judges and lawyers, by members of the aristocracy stung by his judgments, and by anyone who wanted to see good government. Finally, Wolsey was the favorite, and favorites always breed resentment. The only way to get to Henry was to go through Wolsey. Remember that Henry VII had been careful never to elevate any one of his subjects. You never heard me talk about a favorite under Henry VII or a particular first minister.

Henry VIII, preoccupied with his youthful pleasures, let Wolsey do all the dirty work. As a consequence, people tended to forget who was king. They

really did think that Wolsey called all the shots and that his power was unassailable. It's possible that Henry did this on purpose. One of the uses of a favorite to any king is that they become the sin eater. They take on all the resentment. Somebody needs to be denied a job? Let Wolsey do the denying. They'll hate Wolsey.

Wolsey was a useful deflector of blame. Take patronage: The only way to secure a government job was through Wolsey. He controlled so many offices that something like half of the government owed their jobs to him. If you wanted a job, you went to Hampton Court or York Place. You didn't go to the king's palace at Westminster. This led John Skelton to write, "The king's court should have the excellence, but Hampton Court hath the preeminence."

Maybe Henry just didn't want to deal with all that business. Maybe he didn't want to deal with the resentment, but in the end, despite all the people who owed Wolsey their jobs, Wolsey's only friend was the king. In the end, the king was still the most important person in the realm. Wolsey sometimes forgot this, as did other courtiers. The only thing that kept Wolsey in power was the king's favor, the king's laziness, and Wolsey's ability to do his bidding.

For most of the first 20 years of the reign, that bidding centered around war and foreign policy. It is with war and foreign policy that we will spend the rest of this lecture.

During the first half of the reign of Henry VIII, both the king and Cardinal Wolsey concentrated on an active and aggressive European foreign policy. You will remember that Henry VII had been content to make friends abroad and rattle the saber a little, but he had never been particularly interested in foreign affairs except as a way to bolster his position at home.

Why did the son take a different path? There were lots of reasons for Henry and Wolsey's aggressive foreign policy. The first argument was historical. Remember that ever since the Norman Conquest, the continental option had been attractive to English kings. Edward III and Henry V had won glory fighting France. Richard II and Henry VI had lost their thrones in part because they failed to do so successfully.

England's continental holdings at this point had shrunk down to the port of Calais. It was very attractive to Henry to possibly increase those and possibly revive England's empire on the continent. Indeed, it could be argued that an English presence on the continent was a natural for European people. It could be argued that previous English kings had spent five centuries trying to figure out England's role in Europe. It could be argued that the English people have spent the subsequent five centuries trying to figure out that role as they are today, so Henry VIII is merely asking a question that is very reasonable.

There was a political argument too. It's Henry V's political argument. If you take the nobility and you take them to France and get them all fighting the French, they're not fighting you. Following the reign of Henry VII, lots of nobles were upset with the way they'd been treated by the monarchy. This was almost a gift of Henry to his nobles. Here was something that they would all enjoy doing together.

Finally, as always with Henry VIII, there was, shall we say, a hormonal argument. Henry was young. He was male. He was anxious to win glory on the battlefield, and he had his father's Treasury surplus to play with. Playing at tournaments with his nobility was just not enough. This King Hal, like a previous King Hal, needed a real war, and here is where Cardinal Wolsey came in.

Wolsey supported Henry's war effort, first because he wanted to please Henry. Whatever Henry wanted, Wolsey had to do. He knew that the only way to retain the king's confidence was to make him a major player in Europe. There is also some evidence that Wolsey himself had continental ambitions, at least he was always being accused of wanting to become the next—indeed only the second—English pope. This was a possible incentive for Wolsey: If he made Henry a great European monarch, he himself would shine on the world stage.

In fact, these goals were hopelessly unrealistic. Europe at the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century was dominated by two much larger, more powerful nations than England. First, there was France, ruled by the Valois with perhaps three times as many people and much greater resources than England.



Second, there was the Holy Roman Empire, which consisted of most of Central Europe and, after 1519, it was united by Charles V with Spain and the Spanish Empire. Charles V was a Habsburg, so it was the Valois versus the Habsburgs.

England was, in contrast, too poor and militarily weak to make a difference between these two powers. It was also too far away from the main area of contention, which was Italy. These countries were going to end up fighting over Northern Italy. The result was a series of conflicts and diplomatic negotiations in which England really had little business or hope of gain.

They were fought in four stages that I'll go through in turn. The first stage took place between 1511 and 1514. During this period, Henry and Wolsey's chances were brightest. Henry was young and nearly every other major European ruler was old. At the beginning of these wars, France was ruled by Louis XIII. The Holy Roman Empire was ruled by Maximilian I, and Spain by our old friend Ferdinand of Aragon. All were of Henry VII's generation.

Another advantage Henry had was he had his father's Treasury to play with. Henry allied with the Holy Roman Empire against France and Scotland, the two ancestral enemies, and he achieved great success. In 1513, the Scots were defeated at the battle of Flodden. In 1514, Henry captured Tournai, in France. Wolsey negotiated a peace treaty, which allowed Henry to keep Tournai, and he also engineered the marriage of Henry's sister, Princess Mary, to the King of France, who paid Henry a large subsidy in return.

But the war cost an enormous amount of money: £650,000. I've actually seen a figure as high as £900,000. Even if you take the smaller figure, that's six times the annual royal revenue. In one fell swoop, Henry has wiped out his father's nest egg.

The period from 1515–1520 is a period of peace. During this period, Henry's situation deteriorates. He's out of money. France gets a young, new, aggressive king, Francis I, who's more than a match for Henry. Henry wants to marry him off to his predecessor's widow, Princess Mary. Francis rejects this. He's not interested. Instead, he encourages a rebellion in Scotland against Henry's other sister, Queen Margaret.

Wolsey attempts to shore England's position up by engaging in strenuous diplomatic efforts, culminating in a summit meeting called "the Field of the Cloth of Gold" in 1520. Francis and Henry attempt to out-protocol and out-display each other with magnificence. Perhaps the culmination of the Field of the Cloth of Gold is a famous wrestling match that took place between the two kings which, ominously, Francis won.

War broke out again in the third stage between 1521 and 1525. Once again, Henry was aligned with the Holy Roman Empire, this time led by the young and aggressive Charles V. The English forces landed in France, burnt a few villages, and went home, but Charles won a tremendous victory over the French at Pavia in 1525, capturing Francis I. Henry thought that this was his big chance. His plan was to mount a quick campaign, secure Charles's support by offering his daughter—also a Princess Mary—in matrimony, and win the throne of France a la Henry V.

The trouble is this would all take money. Henry turned to Wolsey and said, "Cardinal Wolsey, go to Parliament and raise for me" something that Wolsey called the "Amicable Grant." Unfortunately, Parliament was not amicable. They didn't grant the Amicable Grant and as a result, Henry had no money. As a result, he could not offer a dowry along with his daughter Mary. As a result, Charles would have nothing to do with that bargain. As a result, Henry did not get his French crown. Instead, he became terribly frustrated and angry with the Holy Roman Empire.

That explains the fourth stage. In 1525–1528, a diplomatic revolution took place in Europe. Henry and Wolsey switched to the French side. They had two reasons for doing this. First, they were fed up with Charles V's disregard for English interests. Second, Henry wanted to rescue the pope from the Emperor Charles V, who had just sacked Rome and taken him into custody in 1527. The reason Henry wanted to separate Pope Clement VII from Charles was because he wanted something from that pope: He wanted a divorce from his wife, Catherine of Aragon, who just happened to be the Holy Roman Emperor's aunt.

We'll talk about that in the next lecture. In the meantime, I think there are four significant points to be made about these wars. One, they drained

the English Treasury. From now on, Henry VIII would be a poor king. Two, they increased popular resentment of high taxes and their perceived author, Cardinal Wolsey. Three, they discredited Wolsey with the king. Neither his diplomacy nor his parliamentary management had achieved the desired result. Four, they demonstrated that England was, at this point, at best a second- or third-rate power. That was the most devastating lesson, because England and Henry needed all the prestige they could muster as they embarked upon the great adventure of their reign: what contemporaries called euphemistically “The King’s Great Matter.”

# The King's Great Matter: 1527–30

## Lecture 10

**Henry VIII's attempt to obtain from the Roman Catholic Church a divorce from his first wife, Catherine of Aragon. That attempt would lead eventually not just to the end of Henry's marriage, but to the end of his kingdom's relationship with the Roman Catholic Church. ... It could be argued further that almost everything of note that happens in this course from this point on has something to do with the Reformation.**

**A**bout 1525, Henry VIII began to contemplate an end to his marriage to Catherine of Aragon. Up to this point, the marriage had been happy, not least because Catherine overlooked Henry's unreliable fidelity. So why should the king have wanted to end his marriage now?

The first of Henry's concerns was the royal succession. Catherine's obstetrical history was not happy. In 1516, she gave birth to a daughter, Mary. Subsequent pregnancies ended in miscarriage or still birth. By 1525, Catherine was 40 years old and had not been pregnant for seven years. As a result, it would appear that Henry would be succeeded by a woman. The contemporary view of female rule was negative. It violated the Great Chain of Being. There were few successful precedents in medieval and early-modern Europe. The Wars of the Roses were still a vivid memory. Henry was obsessed with what would happen to England after his death. He feared that a female ruler would be unable to keep the barons in line, leaving the Tudors open to the dynastic chaos of future Wars of the Roses. Henry's elevation of his illegitimate son, Henry Fitzroy, to the title Duke of Richmond in 1525 indicates that he was exploring all options.

Henry's second concern was the state of his soul. An amateur theologian, Henry knew that there was a problem, based in scripture, with his marriage to Catherine, for she was his brother's widow. Leviticus 20:21 forbids a man to lie with his brother's wife. But Deuteronomy 20:5 encourages men to marry their brother's widows. Pope Julius II had granted Henry and Catherine a dispensation from the penalties associated with the first prohibition in 1504. But as God seemed to deny him a son, Henry began to have doubts about

the dispensation and his marriage. Thus, Anne Boleyn was not the cause of Henry's dissatisfaction with his marriage. But she was the catalyst.

Anne was the intelligent, witty 19-year-old daughter of a diplomat. Her vivacity contrasted sharply with the sober-sided respectability of Catherine. Henry had an affair with Anne's elder sister, Mary, but fell in love with the younger by 1526. This did not lead to immediate physical consummation. Henry could not take the risk of impregnating and, thus, "ruining," the future Queen of England. Anne did not want to be Henry's next concubine; she wanted legitimate status as his wife and queen. Thus, neither would have been served by a simple love affair. They needed a proper marriage.

In 1527, Henry ordered Cardinal Wolsey to begin proceedings to secure an annulment of his first marriage. (Technically, the church could not grant a divorce, but contemporaries generally used the "d" word, not the "a" word.) Wolsey, having failed to secure the Amicable Grant, badly needed a success. At first glance, his chances seemed good. Contrary to popular belief, the early-modern Roman Catholic Church would annul an inconvenient marriage if the parties were important enough. In 1514, for example, the pope broke the marriage contract between Henry's sister, Mary Tudor, and the future Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V, so that she could marry France's Louis XII. In 1515, after Louis died, Mary wedded the twice betrothed Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk, after the pope declared both of his previous unions invalid. In 1527, the current pope, Clement VII, granted the divorce of Henry's other sister, Margaret, Queen Dowager of Scotland, from Archibald Douglas, Earl of Angus, so that she could marry Henry Stewart, later Lord Methven.

In May of 1527, Wolsey, acting as papal representative, convened a secret court in London to investigate the royal marriage. The plan was to come to a quick judgment, then simply inform Catherine and the pope that the marriage was invalid. But at this point, three difficulties arose:

- Catherine, getting wind of these plans, notified the pope and the Holy Roman Emperor.
- Clement refused to overturn the previous pope's dispensation and, thus, undermine papal power in general.

- Charles V opposed the divorce because Catherine of Aragon was his aunt; worse for Henry, in the spring of 1527, Charles's armies sacked Rome and took the pope prisoner. Now, Clement had even less reason to grant the divorce.

Things looked up for Henry in the year 1528. The French were on the move against Charles V, which reduced the pressure on the pope. In that year, he granted Wolsey a commission to hold a trial. But he also named to that commission Lorenzo, Cardinal Compeggio, a wily master of Vatican politics. Compeggio had secret papal instructions to prevent the divorce at all costs. Compeggio managed to delay the opening until May 1529. This gave Catherine and her supporters time to prepare a case.

The queen appeared, unexpectedly, at the trial. Catherine made three points: First, she questioned the right of the court to examine her marriage. Given that the law was the king's law, how could it pass judgment on a royal person? Second, she explicitly denied having had sexual relations with her first husband, Arthur. Thus, their unconsummated marriage was invalid



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Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn being observed by Queen Catherine.

in canon law. Third, she demanded the right to appeal her case directly to Rome. All three arguments caught Wolsey off guard.

In the end, it did not matter. In July 1529, Compeggio, arguing that a papal court should follow the same schedule as it would at the Vatican, suspended proceedings for the hot Italian summer—despite the fact that it was meeting in London! The court would never meet again. This outcome destroyed Wolsey's credit with the king. Henry charged Wolsey with *praemunire*, that is, acknowledging a foreign jurisdiction (the pope) in violation of his loyalty to Henry. He then stripped Wolsey of his civil offices and property. Wolsey slowly made his way to York, which he had long neglected. But he also began to engage in intrigue at court to regain his old position. This led to accusations, followed by a charge, of treason. Mercifully, Wolsey died at Leicester Abbey, while returning to stand trial, in November 1530.

These events proved four things: Henry had always been the real power in England. For all his titles and wealth, once Wolsey lost the king's confidence, he was doomed. The divorce started out as a private matter between husband and wife, but it inevitably became bound up with arcane theology, high politics, international diplomacy, even the weather in Italy. On the diplomatic front, Henry and England mattered far less in Europe than the emperor; therefore, the divorce would never come from Rome.

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**The divorce started out as a private matter between husband and wife, but it inevitably became bound up with arcane theology, high politics, international diplomacy, even the weather in Italy.**

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After Wolsey's fall, the English court and aristocracy divided into three factions. The Aragonese faction, secretly led by Sir Thomas More, supported and advised the queen. The Boleyn faction supported the divorce and Anne's ambition to be queen. They included clergymen who wanted reform and a former servant of Wolsey's named Thomas Cromwell. Finally, a middle faction, composed of conservative nobles, such as Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk, inclined toward unreformed Catholicism and against the divorce. But their

habit was to do the king's bidding. Following the recall of the divorce case to Rome, these factions fought over both the king's ear and his soul.

During this period, Henry tried two strategies. He asked the great universities of Europe for their opinions on his theological predicament. Predictably, they offered no clear consensus. Far more significantly, he called a Parliament and invited it to inquire into the state of the church. ■

### Suggested Reading

Bucholz and Key, *Early Modern England*, chap. 2, sec. 1.

Guy, *Tudor England*, chap. 5.

Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII*, chaps. 6–8.

### Questions to Consider

1. Why were Henry and his subjects so dead set against a female succession? How did contemporary theology and the Great Chain of Being affect their judgment? How important was the memory of the Wars of the Roses?
2. Why did the pope not grant the divorce? He and his predecessors had done so in earlier cases. What special circumstances made Henry's request so problematic?



# The King's Great Matter: 1527–30

## Lecture 10—Transcript

In the last lecture, we examined the personality and early reign of Henry VIII. Despite the vast expenditure of national treasure on his various European wars for almost 20 years, it might be argued that the reign didn't really get underway until it confronted its central issue, what contemporaries called euphemistically (and I think probably because they were terrified of it) "The King's Great Matter."

This lecture deals with Henry VIII's attempt to obtain from the Roman Catholic Church a divorce from his first wife, Catherine of Aragon. That attempt would lead eventually not just to the end of Henry's marriage, but to the end of his kingdom's relationship with the Roman Catholic Church, which had rather prematurely dubbed Henry "Defender of the Faith." This would lead in turn to the Protestant Reformation.

It could be argued further that almost everything of note that happens in this course from this point on has something to do with the Reformation. No wonder that "The King's Great Matter" has often been portrayed in conventional wisdom as one of those historical moments when the obsessions or passions of a single man have changed history.

As we'll see in the next few lectures, while the break from Rome did begin with the king, it soon grew to be much more complicated. This lecture will cover Henry's political and theological rationales for seeking to annul his marriage. It will cover the rise of Anne Boleyn, the initial attempts to secure the divorce from the pope, and the fall of Cardinal Wolsey when he failed to do so.

On the primary level, the problem that Henry VIII wanted to solve was simple, personal and, to the extent that a king can ever have privacy, private. About 1525, Henry began to contemplate an end to his marriage to Catherine of Aragon. This was not primarily because he was attracted to another woman, at least not at first. Nor was he frustrated sexually or particularly angry at Catherine. Up to this point, the marriage had been happy. Henry

had for almost 20 years been a gallant husband and Catherine's champion at every tournament as "Sir Loyal Heart."

She was his confidante, the one in whose eyes he wished to shine. She'd made him proud when he'd been away in France in 1513. She had administered the realm and won for him the battle of Flodden against the Scots. He had made her proud by rushing back to Richmond Palace and depositing the keys of French cities at her feet. In addition, she had quite conveniently overlooked Henry's unreliable fidelity.

Why should the king have wanted to end this very convenient marriage now? The answer is complicated and involved problems that were far weightier than that of the royal libido. It began with the issue of Henry's successor. Catherine's obstetrical history was not a happy one. In 1516, she gave birth to a daughter, Mary. Henry was moderately pleased. He consoled himself with the disappointment at not having a male heir with the thought that there would be many more children where that one came from. As he remarked to the Venetian ambassador, "We are both young. If it was a daughter this time, by the grace of God, the son will follow."

Subsequent pregnancies ended in miscarriage and three stillbirths, two of them male children. By 1525, Queen Catherine was 40 and she had not been pregnant for seven years. I need to remind you at this point that because of poor diet and a variety of other factors, we know that menopause came earlier for women than it does now. It was unlikely that Catherine would ever be pregnant again.

As a result, it would appear that the eminently macho King Hal would have no male son to carry on his line. Why should this alone have led to the breakup of a happy marriage? Henry's principal concern was the succession, namely the succession of a female. Of course, today we know that England has been ruled quite successfully by females. You could make an argument that England's greatest periods have come under female rule, but no one knew that at the time.

Henry's distress, which reached a point of obsession, may strike you as irrational and chauvinistic, and it was that. Henry was very much a man of

his times. The contemporary view of female rule was profoundly negative. Remember that it violated fundamentally the Great Chain of Being. If God was a male, as surely he was, and the king embodied God's power on earth, how could a woman represent that power. More to the point, how could she contend with other male rulers or lead troops in battle? If God had placed man at the head of the state, Church, and family, how could all these things now be subordinate to a woman? What would be the consequences for order and for the chain?

Then there was history. English history afforded almost no precedence of female rule. There was just one: the brief ascendancy for a few short weeks in 1141 of Queen Matilda. Matilda had fought a civil war against her cousin, King Stephen, who ruled from 1135–1154. It was universally acknowledged that these six weeks were disastrous. Historians now realize, of course, that all the chronicles were being written by men. Six weeks isn't exactly a lot of time to prove yourself as a ruler, especially in the midst of a civil war.

One of the themes that I'll keep coming back to in this course is that sometimes perception is more important than reality. Sometimes perception is everything and in this case, the perception was that women make bad rulers. Henry and his subjects anticipated disaster from a female reign.

As a consequence, poor Mary was given a good, but very traditional, education: lots of moral instruction, but no training to be queen. Then there was more recent history. Remember that the Wars of the Roses were still a vivid memory for Henry's subjects, as I hope they are for you. Those, like Henry, who had not lived through them, were reared on their stories. As a result, Henry was obsessed with what would happen to England after his death. His fear was that Mary would be a rerun of Henry VI or Edward V, unable to keep the barons in line, thus leaving the Tudors open to the same short reign as the Lancastrians and the Yorkists, thus plunging England into chaos.

Remember that Yorkist pretenders still lived. There was Henry Courtney, Marquis of Exeter; George Nevill, Lord Bergavenny; Sir Edward Nevill; Margaret, Countess of Salisbury; Sir Henry Poole, Lord Montegu; Reginald

Poole; and Sir Geoffrey Poole. Remember those six sons of Edward III? Can you imagine how many descendants there were by the 1520s?

In 1525, Henry countered by elevating his illegitimate son, Henry Fitzroy, to the title Duke of Richmond. This may have been preliminary to naming him heir, but stop and think about it: If a female succession was going to cause problems, how about the elevation of an illegitimate son? Surely, the English aristocracy would be no more willing to follow that particular venture than they would a Queen Mary. In any case, Richmond put an end to the controversy by dying in 1536.

The fate of Henry's kingdom was not the only thing weighing on his mind. There was the problem of his immortal soul as well. Remember that Henry VIII was something of an amateur theologian. He always knew that there was a problem with his marriage to Catherine. Recall that she'd been the widow of his elder brother, Arthur. In the Bible, Leviticus 20:21 forbids a man to lie with his brother's wife. Specifically the reading is, "Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy brother's wife. It is thy brother's nakedness. If a man shall take his brother's wife, it is an impurity. He has uncovered his brother's nakedness. They shall be childless."

On the other hand, Deuteronomy 20:5 encourages men to marry their brothers' widows: "When brethren dwell together and one of them dieth without children, the wife of the deceased shall not marry to another, but his brother shall take her and raise up seed for his brother."

To resolve the difficulty, Pope Julius II had granted a dispensation from the Leviticus prohibition in 1504. Henry hadn't given this a second thought until his hopes for a son began to be dashed. Remember that according to the Great Chain of Being, Henry was God's chosen. How was it that God's chosen was not blessed with a son like other men? Were not the miscarriages and stillbirths a sign of God's Levitical displeasure?

Contemporaries did indeed view obstetrical mishaps as signs of God's punishment. Any fool could see that Catherine was blameless and of course Henry could never blame himself, so Henry blamed the marriage, rather than the symptoms of venereal disease, which he may have given to Catherine.

This is one possible theory for her obstetrical history. The king began to conclude that the dispensation was invalid. It didn't take. His marriage was cursed.

All of this was not to say that the only things on Henry's mind were constitutional and theological. There was also Anne Boleyn, but only when we grasp these other concerns do we understand that Anne was the catalyst, not the cause, of Henry's dissatisfaction with his marriage.

Who was this remarkable woman? In 1525, Anne Boleyn was the intelligent, witty 19-year old daughter of Sir Thomas Boleyn. As the daughter of a diplomat, she had spent time at the French court, picking up French manners and a degree of polish as a lady in waiting to the queen. Henry always said that he liked her French ways, whatever that meant.

While not considered particularly beautiful, Anne had pretty, dark eyes and a mind that was bright, vivacious, highly cultured, and inclined towards Protestant reform. Her vivacity must have contrasted sharply in Henry's eyes with the sober-sided respectability of Catherine, who, remember, was five years older than Henry VIII.

Henry first encountered Anne while carrying on an affair with her elder sister, Mary. By 1526, he had transferred his allegiance and affections to the younger sibling. This did not at first lead to immediate physical consummation. Henry did not take the risk—he couldn't take the risk—of impregnating and, thus, “ruining” the future Queen of England. Anne for her part didn't want to be Henry's next concubine; she wanted legitimate status as his wife and queen.

In fact, there's a popular tradition that's been enshrined in several films that it was Anne who first planted the idea of the divorce in Henry's mind. According to this view, all Henry wanted was a love affair and a quick roll in the hay. It was Anne who made it clear that she would not sleep with him until he made her an honest woman—until he made her a queen.

It's a wonderful image, isn't it? The middle-aged and slightly paunchy monarch begging for a tumble with this slip of a girl, and she refusing

imperiously—the gleam of a crown in her eye. But remember, that neither one of them would have been well served by a simple love affair. In particular, a fling would have solved none of the king’s succession or theological problems. What he needed was a new, young, fertile, legitimate wife, not a mistress. What he needed was an end to his first marriage so that he could contract a second.

Here, once again, is where Wolsey came in. In 1527, Henry ordered the great cardinal to begin proceedings to secure an annulment of his first marriage. You can almost see Henry returning to Wolsey, can’t you, and saying, “Wolsey, you’re a big man with Rome. Get me this.”

Perhaps at this point, we better straighten out our terminology as to precisely what we mean by this. Technically, the Church could not grant a divorce. What it could perform, and what Henry wanted, was an annulment. Perhaps tacitly recognizing that Henry and Catherine really had been husband and wife, contemporaries almost never used the “a” word. They used the “d” word: They called it a divorce. I will refer to it as the divorce, even though what Henry wants is an annulment. Henry’s the only one who doesn’t believe he was really married.

Wolsey, having failed to secure the Amicable Grant, really needs a success, so of course he gets to work on this right away. At first, his chances of success seem pretty good. Contrary to popular belief, the Early-modern Roman Catholic Church was perfectly happy to annul an inconvenient marriage if the parties involved were important enough. Examples abounded: In 1514, the pope broke the marriage contract between Henry’s sister, Mary Tudor, and the future Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V, so that she could marry the King of France, Louis XII. If you remember Henry’s sister Mary’s part in the last lecture, you will realize that she spent most of her life as a kind of diplomatic bargaining chip.

In 1515, after Louis died, Mary was free to marry the twice-betrothed Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk, who was only freed when the pope declared both of his previous unions invalid. In 1527, the current pope, Clement VII, the one that Henry wants the divorce from, granted the divorce of Henry’s other

sister, Margaret, Queen Dowager of Scotland, from Archibald Douglas, Earl of Angus, so that she could marry Henry Stewart, later Lord Methven.

Henry's divorce was by no means a theological or procedural non-starter. These things happened all the time. In May 1527, the great cardinal, acting as papal legate, convened a secret court in London to investigate the royal marriage. Specifically, the king was charged with cohabiting against canon law for 18 years with the wife of his deceased brother, Arthur. It's a remarkable moment: Wolsey summons Henry to this ecclesiastical court, but then asks permission to charge him.

The plan was for the court to come to a quick judgment. Only then would Catherine and the pope be informed. It was hoped that the latter, at least, would simply go along.

At this point, three problems arose: one personal, one theological, and one diplomatic. First, Catherine got wind of the plans. She sent a servant of her household, a server at court (somebody who served food), named Philippez, to inform the Holy Roman Emperor and through him, the pope. Philippez needed a safe conduct pass out of the country, so he had to go to Henry. The story that Catherine and Philippez concocted was that he had to return to Spain to visit his sick mother (what nice Spanish boy wouldn't return to visit his sick mother?), but that Catherine had forbidden him to go.

Henry saw right through this immediately, but he granted the safe conduct anyway. His plan was to have spies along the route who would hijack Philippez. This is very much out of "The Three Musketeers," except that it anticipates it by many centuries. I don't know if Philippez's horse was too fast, but somehow he made it through. He got to the emperor, who was summering at Valladolid in Spain, at the end of July.

Do you remember my point from the last lecture about household servants and how useful they can be? How you can use them to cut through red tape and to bypass channels? This is a classic example.

As we've seen, Charles V, the most powerful ruler in Europe, would oppose the divorce because Catherine of Aragon was his aunt; worse, for Henry, in

the spring of 1527, Charles's armies had actually sacked Rome and had the pope as prisoner. This gave the pope, Clement VII, a good incentive not to grant the divorce either. Charles V and the Holy Roman Emperor were a lot more important than Henry VIII of England.

Clement had his theological reasons as well. Because of course, to invalidate the marriage would be to say that Julius II had erred in granting the previous dispensation. It would mean saying that a previous pope was wrong. The power of the papacy relies to a very great extent on precedent. You can't just overturn a previous pope's decision and expect people to listen to you. No pope would do that, and Clement VII certainly was not going to do that.

Things seemed to look up for Henry in the year 1528. The French were on the move against Charles V. This reduced pressure on the pope. In that year, Clement granted Wolsey a commission to hold a trial. What Wolsey wanted was a commission that would name him sole judge, but instead the pope sent an Italian cardinal, Lorenzo, Cardinal Compeggio, who was a wily master of Vatican politics. Compeggio had secret papal instructions to basically pull a "go-slow"—prevent the divorce at all costs.

In fact, at this point, Clement wants to wash his hands of the whole embarrassing affair. He actually wrote to Henry privately and advised him, "Look, just divorce Catherine without permission. Commit bigamy if you have to. I don't care. Leave me out of it." Henry, obsessed with the proper forums and worried about the state of his soul and the legitimacy of his successor, refuses. Here's an irony: Who's the better Catholic here? Henry, who's paying attention to his scruples, or the pope?

Compeggio managed to delay the opening until May 1529. This gave Catherine and her supporters time to prepare a case. When the court convened, Catherine unexpectedly appeared, to the delight of a cheering crowd. Catherine was always popular. She demanded to speak. It was her finest hour.

She made three points. First, she questioned the right of the court to examine her marriage. After all, she was a royal person. Since the law is to some extent the king's law, how could it pass judgment on her? We'll see this



argument again later. It's actually a fairly weak argument, because canon law was involved and the Church presumably has jurisdiction, even over royal persons, although remember, this raises a Great Chain of Being issue. There's something here.

With much dignity, she explicitly denied having had sexual relations with her first husband, Arthur. Therefore, the first marriage had not been consummated and was canonically invalid. Was Catherine telling the truth? According to Henry and a number of other court servants who were sort of dug up for the occasion, Arthur had bragged after the wedding night about being "in Spain," but Catherine had always denied it, even before the divorce ever came up. Years before, she'd actually written a letter, I believe to the pope, soon after her marriage. She'd always denied that any intercourse had taken place. This is the classic example of "he said, she said."

In any case, it doesn't matter. Who would dare to question the queen on this? She's the only living witness. This is a nail in Henry's coffin.

Third, she demanded the right to appeal her case directly to Rome. All three arguments caught Wolsey off guard and *in the end*, it didn't matter. In July 1529, Compeggio, arguing that a papal court should follow the same schedule as it would at the Vatican, suspended the trial for the hot Italian summer, despite the fact that it was taking place in London. The court would never meet again. That summer, Charles V went back on the offensive. The pope, anxious not to offend him and armed with Catherine's arguments, recalled the case to Rome, where Henry was sure he would never receive justice.

Thwarted, Henry turned on Wolsey. He began by charging Wolsey with *praemunire*, which, you may remember from a previous lecture, is the medieval crime of acknowledging a foreign jurisdiction in violation of his loyalty to Henry. This was nonsense. Any Catholic was guilty of *praemunire*. Anybody who respected the pope and listened to what the pope had to say was guilty of violating this law. Wolsey, after all, was a cardinal of the Roman Catholic Church. How could he not be guilty of *praemunire*? This was something that was always available to the king to use against clergymen.

Henry then stripped Wolsey of his civil offices and property, confiscating his two great palaces. Within days, Henry and Anne Boleyn are walking through York Place and figuring out what they're going to do in terms of interior décor.

Wolsey slowly made his way to York to take up residence in the see that he had so long neglected, but like so many fallen politicians, he looked back longingly on power. He began to intrigue at court, and even with foreign ambassadors, to regain his old position—anyone who would talk to him: “Do you think you could say a word to the king? I’m still out here. I’m still talented.”

His many enemies seized on this and accused him of intriguing against the king. Henry charged him with treason. You can cross Henry once, and you might survive. You can’t ever cross Henry twice. Mercifully, Wolsey died while on his way back to stand trial. He died at Leicester Abbey in November 1530. His final words are famous: “If I had served God as diligently as I have done the king, he would not have given me over and my gray hairs.” No one knew it yet, but that might well serve as an epitaph for every royal minister who would ever serve this king.

These events proved, I think, four things. First, though Wolsey’s fall surprised many people, including Wolsey, it reminds us that Henry was no cipher. He’d always been the real power in England. For all the cardinal’s titles and wealth, once he lost the king’s confidence, he was done for. Wolsey’s many other liabilities—pride, greed, corruption, and unpopularity—meant only that his fall was unlamented.

The second thing these events prove is that the divorce had started out as a private matter between husband and wife, but because that husband and wife were royal, it soon became bound up with arcane theology, high politics, international diplomacy, and even the weather in Italy. In other words, there’s no such thing as private when you’re talking about the King of England.

On the diplomatic front, what these events prove is that Henry and England matter very little in Europe, certainly not so much as Charles V and his Holy

Roman Empire. Therefore, the fourth thing these events prove is that the divorce would never come from Rome.

The next few years after Wolsey's fall represent a period of drift. From 1529–1532, it's hard to see what the royal policy is. Henry VIII does some lashing out, but there doesn't seem to be a plan. One reason for this is that the court was dividing into factions. Three great factions, all vying for the king's attention and all vying for the king's ear. In a manner of speaking, they were vying for his soul as well, weren't they?

There was first the Aragonese faction, named for Catherine. This consisted of those who supported and advised the queen, notably the Spanish diplomats at court, Bishops John Fisher and Cuthbert Tunstall, and the king's new lord chancellor, Sir Thomas More. More was a lawyer, scholar, and devout Catholic. He took this job on the condition that he wouldn't be dragged into the mess about the divorce. Publicly, he concentrated on clearing out the backlog of business left over from Wolsey's neglect. Remember, Wolsey presided over numerous courts, but with the divorce on for the last couple years, he'd been unable to sit as judge. He also concentrated on persecuting heretics. Privately, he did what he could to shore up the queen's support in the Council and Parliament. Privately, he's advising the queen on strategy.

Ranged against the Aragonese faction was the Boleyn faction, named of course for Anne. This included members of the Boleyn family who were on the rise, up and coming clergymen who wanted reform, such as Thomas Cranmer, and several important members of the House of Commons, including a shadowy former servant of Wolsey's by the name of Thomas Cromwell. He would become More's nemesis as well as Queen Catherine's.

Finally, holding the balance between these two was a "middle" faction, which was composed of conservative nobles, men like Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk, whom we met in the last lecture, Bishop Steven Gardner, who was Bishop of Winchester, and also Lord Darcy, who was a great peer in the north. These men inclined towards religious conservatism. They were unreformed Catholics, so they were against the divorce. Their habit was to do the king's bidding. If inclination and habit ever had a war for these men, they would choose habit: They would go with the king.

While these factions fought for ascendancy, Henry cast about for a way to pressure the pope to grant his divorce. He tried all sorts of strategies. One was to ask the great universities of Europe to rule on the matter. The results, as is often the case when you ask universities for just about anything, were inconclusive.

The English and French universities, who of course were answerable to Henry and Francis I, Henry's new ally, found for Henry. They said, "Yes, no marriage!" The German and Italian universities, which of course were answerable to Charles V and the pope, said, "Of course the marriage is valid. Of course the dispensation was valid." They disagreed. In other words, none of these great scholars forgot on which side their bread was buttered.

In that same year, and a good deal more alarmingly, Henry opened a parliamentary front. He called a Parliament for the specific purpose of inquiring into the state of the Roman Catholic Church. Dutifully, the Mercers' Company, which knows nothing about this and isn't interested in the divorce, presented a series of grievances against the Church. The result was a series of laws against high fees and pluralism, the payment of a fine by the clergy of £118,000 pounds, and their admission in the document of submission that Henry was "the sole protector and supreme head of the English Church." They added the saving qualification, "as far as the law of Christ allows." This was not yet the Royal Supremacy, nor was that even the goal.

Henry's strategy was that if he beat up the Church, maybe he could get the pope's attention. Maybe the pope would say, "You know, I've got to treat this person better. I've got to give him what he wants because he could attack the Church in England."

At least one of the king's servants saw in these maneuvers an idea and an opportunity that was far more ambitious. That man was Thomas Cromwell. Cromwell began to conclude that the only way to get the king his divorce from the Church was to make him the head of it, in England at any rate. We begin the road to the Royal Supremacy.

In this lecture, we have addressed why Henry VIII wanted to end his marriage to Catherine of Aragon and the initial steps he took to accomplish that. We've argued that his desire to end his marriage was born out of theological scruples and political necessity as much as it was an expression of his love for Anne Boleyn or of his libido. I will remind you that time and time again in this course, everything comes down for the Tudors to the dynasty—to the survival of the dynasty. Henry was willing to toss away a good marriage and a good wife for that above all.

The Church refused to grant the king's wish as much out of broad geopolitical realities as out of theology. Whatever the reason, that refusal felled Henry's principal minister and favorite, Cardinal Wolsey.

In the next lecture, Henry will acquire a new minister who will secure his divorce by breaking England's ancient ties to Rome and setting in motion a Protestant Reformation. In the next lecture, Thomas Cromwell will engineer the Royal Supremacy.

# The Break from Rome: 1529–36

## Lecture 11

**It was almost certainly Cromwell who recognized the reality of the situation: The pope would never grant a divorce. The only way of securing a divorce was to replace the pope with the king as head of the church of England. Since the people didn't care for the divorce, they might not stand for that as an excuse to break with the pope, but they might go for it as a means to reform the church.**

**G**radually, out of the wreckage of Henry and Wolsey's initial attempt to secure a divorce from the church arose Thomas Cromwell's idea: make Henry its head in England. In 1529, Henry called a Parliament for the specific purpose of enquiring into the state of the church. He had no long-term goal yet. He hoped that by opening the church to criticism and threatening reform, he could get the pope to listen.

What was the state of the Roman Catholic Church in England in 1529? Historians have long argued about this. For many years, it was thought that the late-medieval church was lax, corrupt, and unpopular, as alleged by some literary sources (Chaucer, Langland) and later Protestant reformers. But more recent scholarship argues that the church was, by and large, popular and effective. Can we sort this out?

The Roman Catholic Church was the only legal religion of the English state. It was ever present in the lives of English men and women. It provided their explanation of life, death, success, and misfortune. Its holidays, sacraments, and ceremonies marked the stages of the year and the stages of their lives. Its pulpits provided the only regular source of news. Its schools and colleges provided the only source of education. Its monasteries, convents, and hospitals provided charity and health care. Its courts monitored adultery and fornication, blasphemy and swearing, drunkenness and gambling, and inheritance and debt. Its guilds monitored economic activity in towns. It owned nearly a quarter of the land in England, which made it the neighbor or employer of many. It was a heinous sin and a capital crime, punishable by burning at the stake, to publicly disagree with the teachings of the Church;

thus, we should not be surprised if historians have found that most English people were orthodox. It was dangerous to be otherwise.

This does not mean, however, that most people had a clear idea of what the doctrines of their faith actually were. They were passive observers of mass said in Latin behind a screen. The Bible was also kept in Latin and out of the hands of the laity. There was a shortage of priests to teach them, and most livings were very poor. As a result, many parishes were not served (absenteeism). Some priests took on multiple parishes, serving none adequately (pluralism). Standards of clerical education and morality varied. The small minority of priests who were excessive drinkers, living with women, or committing other sins clouded the reputations of all. The poverty of most good priests—and their parishioners—stood in uncomfortable contrast to the wealth and worldliness of men like Wolsey.

The late-medieval Church had critics. The Lollards (Dutch for “mumbler”) were founded in the 14<sup>th</sup> century by John Wycliff. Dismayed by corruption in the church and its distance from ordinary people, Wycliff argued that church doctrine, ritual, and organization should be based solely in scripture. This attacked the power of the pope and church hierarchy as well as the sacramental role of the church. The Lollards translated and disseminated the Bible, but they were hampered by the lack of a printing press and royal persecution. In 1401, an act was passed for the burning of heretics. Lollards went underground and were just about extinct by 1529, but they did have an indirect influence on the Lutherans.

Martin Luther, a 16<sup>th</sup>-century German monk and theology professor, was deeply disturbed by the worldliness and corruption of the church and doubtful of its sacramental role. Like Wycliff, he emphasized scripture over church authority. He also argued that faith alone, not sacraments or good works, led to salvation. In 1517, Luther publicly attacked the church’s granting of indulgences from punishment in purgatory. Luther developed a small following in English port cities and the universities, especially Cambridge.

Finally, Wolsey had monopolized so many offices in the church that his fall left a gaping vacuum at the top of its leadership, just as it was about to face its most skillful and ruthless antagonist: Thomas Cromwell. It is generally

thought that Thomas Cromwell came up with the idea that if the head of the Roman Catholic Church in England—the pope—would not grant the king his divorce, then the king would just have to assume that position himself.

Thomas Cromwell had traveled as a soldier and merchant on the Continent, where he picked up reformist ideas. He came to Henry’s attention by distinguishing himself in the attack on church corruption in the Parliament of 1529. In March 1532, Cromwell encouraged Parliament to draw up a list of clerical abuses, “The Commons Supplication against the Ordinaries.” After a stern warning from Henry, the Convocation, the legislative body of the church, agreed to “The Submission of the Clergy” (May 1532). This document gave Henry the right to summon the Convocation and approve or veto all its legislation, making him the effective head of the church in England.

**“The Submission of the Clergy” ... gave Henry the right to summon the Convocation and approve or veto all its legislation, making him the effective head of the church in England.**

In December 1532, Anne Boleyn became pregnant. She and Henry were married in January 1533. (Remember, he already considered the marriage to Catherine invalid.) In the spring of 1533, Parliament passed the Act in Restraint of Appeals, forbidding English subjects from appealing to any foreign jurisdiction. Thus, the pope’s power in England was a dead letter, and the divorce case could be heard only in England. In May 1533, Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury, heard the divorce case and pronounced the marriage of Henry and Catherine to be null and void. In June, Anne was crowned. In September, she gave birth to a girl, named Elizabeth. The king did not conceal his disappointment.

In 1534, Parliament passed new legislation diverting church taxes into royal coffers, delegitimizing Mary, establishing a new order of succession, and making it treason to deny that succession or the king’s title or to call him heretic, infidel, tyrant, or usurper. In 1535–1536, Cromwell, as the king’s Vicar-General in Ecclesiastical Affairs, ordered the imprisonment of clergy who preached against the Royal Supremacy, the destruction of shrines and



images, and the placement of English Bibles in all churches. In 1536, the Crown began to dissolve the monasteries.

How did Englishmen and women who grew up in the old church react to this religious revolution? Most people conformed, but here were exceptions. Sir Thomas More and Bishop Fisher had no trouble with the new succession, but as good Catholics, they could not agree that the first marriage was invalid. Eventually, they were convicted of treason on perjured evidence and beheaded. Many clergy resisted, preaching against the changes. A series of rebellions, known as the Pilgrimage of Grace, erupted across the North of England. Some of the rebels' demands were religious and some, economic. The rebels seem to have felt that if Henry would only listen to his people and dismiss the "evil" advisors of the Boleyn faction, he would go back to his wife and his religion. Because Henry did not have an army large enough to crush the rebels, he prevaricated, making some concessions until he could raise more forces. In the spring of 1537, he crushed the Pilgrimage of Grace, executing some 180 people. Henry's reaction to the Pilgrimage of Grace reminds us that Tudor rule was firm, ruthless, and unscrupulous. Henry was ultimately in control but willing to allow his advisors to take the blame for unpopular policies.

The country's reaction to the divorce and royal supremacy suggests that most people did not yet see the implications of these policies or felt more loyalty to bluff King Hal than they did to the old church. Finally, it should be noted that from this point on, religious policy, high politics, diplomacy, and the succession would also be bound up with the state of the English economy. ■

### Suggested Reading

Bucholz and Key, *Early Modern England*, chap. 2, secs. 2–4.

Guy, *Tudor England*, chap. 5.

Haigh, *English Reformations*, pt. I.

Scarbrick, *Henry VIII*, chaps. 9–10.

## Questions to Consider

1. If the Roman Catholic Church was so important in the lives of early-modern Englishmen and women, why did so many people go along with the break from Rome?
2. Why did the Pilgrims of Grace think that the king would listen to their demands?

# The Break from Rome: 1529–36

## Lecture 11—Transcript

In the last lecture, we confronted “The King’s Great Matter,” Henry VIII’s desire for the pope to grant him a divorce from his first wife, Catherine of Aragon. As we saw, that desire was frustrated by the pope’s reluctance to overrule a predecessor, by the armies of Charles V, by Catherine of Aragon’s courtroom performance, and even the Italian weather.

This process relates the process by which Henry VIII and his leading minister, Thomas Cromwell, broke the impasse, as well as England’s allegiance to the pope, by assuming control of the Church of England. This not only secured the divorce; it initiated the Reformation in England.

To understand how this was possible in a world that was so heavily, and many would argue happily, Catholic, the lecture begins with an analysis of the state of the Church of England on the eve of the break with Rome. It will then turn to the parliamentary legislation that legalized the break, made possible the divorce, and established the Royal Supremacy. Then it will move on to the country’s reactions to these developments. The narrative concludes with the fates of Sir Thomas More, Bishop Fisher, and the Pilgrimage of Grace.

As you will recall, the years after Wolsey’s failure to secure the divorce were a period of drift in English foreign and religious policy. The king tried securing a second opinion by consulting the great minds of Europe, but as so often with great minds, they disagreed. He also opened a new front by calling a Parliament and asking it to present their grievances against the Church. As we saw, this resulted in laws against high fees and pluralism, the payment of a fine of £118,000, and their admission that Henry was “the sole protector and supreme head of the English Church” in so far as the law of Christ allows.

Still, despite the implied threat, there was no divorce. The pope would not be budged. However, this does not mean that Henry’s latest campaign was a dead loss. During the course of these proceedings, he had noticed an articulate MP named Thomas Cromwell. Like Wolsey, Cromwell came from an obscure background. His father was a cloth worker and a tavern keeper in

Putney. As a young man, he had traveled extensively in Europe. He tried his hand at being a soldier and a merchant. Along the way, he picked up some sort of legal training and a sympathy for the reformist ideas of Martin Luther.

On his return to England in 1514, he joined Wolsey's household as his secretary, and he got himself elected to Parliament. According to John Foxe, he was "pregnant in wit, in judgment discrete, in tongue eloquent, in service faithful, in stomach courageous, and in his pen active." He would need every one of these qualities for the immense task at hand.

It was almost certainly Cromwell who recognized the reality of the situation: The pope would never grant a divorce. The only way of securing a divorce was to replace the pope with the king as head of the Church of England. Since the people didn't care for the divorce, they might not stand for that as an excuse to break with the pope, but they might go for it as a means to reform the Church. The late-medieval Church in England had its critics.

To understand why it was open to criticism and vulnerable to take over, we must examine the state of the Roman Catholic Church in England in 1529. Historians have long argued about this: For many years, it was thought that the medieval Church was lax, corrupt, and out of touch with the laity, and so unpopular. It certainly seems so if you've read any Chaucer or Langland, or any of the Protestant reformers who wrote about the Church at the time.

It was portrayed as such in the work of Protestant scholars like AG Dickens, who therefore argued that the Reformation was a grass-roots movement. People wanted it. The great mass of the English people yearned for a reformed Church.

More recent research in local records by JJ Scarisbrick, Christopher Haigh, and Eamon Duffy, examining wills and bequests, the records of religious clubs, the sale of religious books, and popular reactions to heresy, argues that the Church was far more popular and effective than used to be thought. If that's true, then the Reformation was not a grass-roots movement. It must have been an imposition foisted upon the English people by a powerful Tudor state. As you can see, these two historical interpretations are loaded

for both Protestants and Catholics living today and for historians who have to know about these things.

According to Haigh, it was the break with Rome that caused the decline of Catholicism, not the decline of Catholicism that led to the break with Rome. Can we sort this out? Let's begin with some basic facts.

The Roman Catholic Church was the official and only legal religion in the English state. As we argued in Lecture Three, this meant that it was ever present in the lives of English men and women. It provided their explanation of life, death, success, and misfortune. Its holidays, sacraments, and ceremonies marked the stages of the year—Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, etc. The Church also marked the stages of their lives in baptism, communion, confirmation, matrimony, anointing of the sick, and Christian burial. Their sanctioned weekly day of rest was largely spent in and around its precincts. The only day off anybody ever got was Sunday. They spent it attending Church services, in the Church itself, and socializing in the churchyards.

Its pulpits provided their only source of regular news. Its schools and colleges provided their only source of education. Its monasteries, convents, and hospitals provided their charity and health care. Its courts settled their disputes over adultery and fornication, blasphemy and swearing, drunkenness and gambling, and inheritance and debt. In fact, some of these were only illegal because the Church said they were.

Its guilds and livery companies regulated economic activity in the towns. It owned nearly a quarter of the land in England, which made it many people's neighbor or employer.

Finally, it was a heinous sin and capital crime—heresy, punishable by burning at the stake—to publicly disagree with the teachings of the Church. This should give us a clue: If historians have found that most English people were orthodox, that many went to Church faithfully, went on pilgrimages, joined religious clubs, bought religious books, gave their wealth to the Church both during and after their lives, and that few engaged in heresy or sought reform, maybe we shouldn't be so surprised. Maybe the Church was doing a terrific job, providing exactly what people needed to get through

life in terms of spiritual comfort, but remember that it was dangerous to say otherwise.

If most people were orthodox, that does not mean that they had a very clear idea of what the doctrines of their faith actually were. Nor does it mean that the church was serving their needs uniformly well. There's plenty of evidence that many lay Catholics had only the vaguest notion of what they were supposed to believe. This would have made a Reformation easier to swallow.

Why this ignorance? In part because the Church did not support active lay participation. The mass was said in Latin and observed by the laity from the back of the Church through a screen. Communion was required of the faithful only three times a year, and confession once a year. The Bible was kept in Latin, the fourth century Vulgate, and so out of the hands of the laity. Most churchmen considered it to be dangerous to hand the Bible to lay people and let them provide their own interpretations. Even if an English translation had been widely available, remember that most people were illiterate and could not read.

Because there was a shortage of priests, this explains another aspect of the ignorance of the Catholic laity. Many parishes were not being served. A "living" is the assignment that a priest receives to a parish, but it also applies to the amount of money he receives as a salary or that he can make by farming the land that's attached to his parish. Most parish livings were poor, which meant that some priests had to take on two or more parishes, leaving them unable to serve either adequately. This is a problem of pluralism, which is always implied in absenteeism.

As a result, it was difficult for the Church to maintain standards. Most priests were not yet university graduates. In Canterbury diocese, something like 20 percent of the priests had university degrees. In Surrey, that percentage was just 10 percent. Some priests were notorious drunkards or living with women in violation of their vows. Others, no doubt struggling with their own poverty because of poor livings, were accused of extorting high fees for marriages, burials, etc., from their poor parishioners. I think we can easily

understand how any human being might fall into those traps, but I think we can also understand why they would be resented.

Admittedly, these are all human failings, not the actions of fiends or monsters. Remember too that for many people in the late Middle Ages, the decision to enter the clergy was a practical career choice in a world that offered few. It was not necessarily a calling from God. What else could a younger son do?

In any case, while only a small minority of priests seemed to have been guilty of these things, there's no evidence of widespread corruption in this Church. Historians have had a lot of trouble finding that anyway. Their existence clouded the reputations of all. Their failings sat particularly ill with the fact that this same Church constantly told the faithful how to live, and prosecuted them for failing to do so in ecclesiastical courts. Even the poverty of most good priests and their parishioners worked against the Church by standing in sharp contrast to the wealth and worldliness of men like Wolsey.

There were two responses to this situation. One was a small but perceptible feeling of anti-clericalism—of resentment of priests. How small? Historians are still arguing about that. There were also calls from within the Church for reform. They came from individuals like Sir Thomas More, John Colet, Simon Fish, and William Tyndale, but they also came from more organized groups.

The Church had long had groups of critics that it regarded as groups of heretics. These groups really only formed critical mass in two assemblages: one old, one new. The old one was called the Lollards. The word *lollard* is Dutch for “mumbler.” The Lollards were founded in the 14<sup>th</sup> century by an Oxford theologian named John Wycliff. Wycliff was dismayed by the corruption he saw in the Church and its distance from ordinary people. He wanted to go back to basics by arguing that the Church doctrine, ritual, and organization should be based solely on Scripture. This had the effect of attacking or eliminating the power of the pope and the Church hierarchy. You can't find a pope, at least not in that form of words, in Scripture.

It attacked the sacramental role of the Church. Wycliff also denied transubstantiation, the belief that the priest changes the wine and the bread

at mass into the body and blood of Christ. The Lollards translated the Bible and sought to put it into as many hands as possible, but they were hampered. Remember, there was no printing press. The Lollard translation of the Bible had to be copied out by hand.

They were also hampered by royal persecution. At first, the Lollards were actually encouraged by some people at court. The Plantagenets (remember that this is in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries) wanted to assert their authority over the Church in England. In other words, the Lollards were a good way of getting at the pope.

The Plantagenets clamped down when it became obvious that the Lollard critique of the Church implied widespread questioning of authority in general. If you're going to question the pope, you might question the king. In 1382, an act was passed against heretical sermons. In 1401, another act was passed for the burning of heretics. In 1414, there was a Lollard revolt, which only confirmed to English kings the association between religious reform and civil rebellion. We'll see that association again and again in the coming lectures.

Over the next century, over 500 Lollards were prosecuted as heretics, though actual burnings were limited to about 30. Lollards went underground and were just about extinct by 1529. There is evidence that they did have an indirect influence on Martin Luther.

Martin Luther, as I suspect you already know, was a German monk and theology professor, and a rough contemporary of Henry VIII. He too was deeply disturbed by the worldliness and corruption of the Church and doubtful of its sacramental role. Like Wycliff, he emphasized Scripture over Church authority. He also argued that faith alone, not sacraments or good works, led to salvation. We will explore Luther's ideas in much greater depth in Lecture Thirteen. In the meantime, you need to know that in 1517, he began to speak out on these ideas, publicly attacking the Church's granting of indulgences from punishment in purgatory. We'll talk more about that as well in the future.



In 1520, Luther was excommunicated by the pope, and Henry VIII rejected his ideas in print, as we have seen. Nevertheless, Luther developed a small but loyal following in England. Lutherans were especially numerous in port cities with lots of merchants. Why? This is where all the new ideas were coming into England. This is where his writings were coming into England. Don't forget too that merchants tend to be literate. Literacy tends to go nicely with Protestantism, because of that emphasis on Scripture.

There was also a couple of groups of university Lutherans, particularly at Cambridge, which became something of a hot bed for reform. Finally, there were Lutherans in the court circle around Anne Boleyn.

The Church had one more problem in addition to the fact that it had its critics, its laity was ignorant and its priesthood was sometimes not up to the task. It's a problem of leadership. You'll remember that Cardinal Wolsey has monopolized so many offices and so much power within the Church that he kept able men from rising and gaining experience. At his fall, he therefore left a gaping vacuum at the top of the Church leadership. Those who tried to fill the vacuum were not used to working with each other, and they were not used to working with Rome, because of course, under Wolsey, the English Church had grown very independent.

This was doubly unfortunate for the Old Church, for it was about to face its most skillful and ruthless antagonist, Thomas Cromwell. As I've indicated, it's generally thought that Thomas Cromwell was the one who came up with the idea that if the head of the Roman Catholic Church in England (the pope) would not grant the king his divorce, then the king would just have to assume the position himself.

As we have seen, Henry had started with something in the Parliament of 1529. The members of Parliament were not especially concerned with "The King's Great Matter," nor did they want to question the pope's authority. They worried about bread and butter issues like corruption in the Church, excessive fees, and whether their constituents would be able to get their babies baptized and buried, if things turned out as they often did in the Early-modern period, without becoming poor. They worried about

pluralism, absenteeism, and whether mass was being said in the churches around England.

In March 1532, Cromwell decided to use those complaints against the papacy. Speaking without royal permission, he played on these concerns by encouraging Parliament to draw up a list of clerical abuses. The resulting list—"The Commons Supplication against the Ordinaries"—charged the clergy with making laws binding the English people without royal or parliamentary approval against the royal prerogative and the rights of Parliament. In effect, this is the old charge of *praemunire*: "You've been imposing laws on the English people that have not been approved by the king or by Parliament."

The document was submitted to Convocation, which is the Church's legislative body. It's got bishops in it. It has priests who have been elected by other priests, or perhaps chosen by the bishop to sit in Convocation. At first, Convocation denied the charges: "This is ridiculous. We're the Church! What are you doing saying these things?" To this, the king reacted angrily, saying that the clergy "be but half our subjects, yea, and scarce our subjects!"

This outburst took place as the clergy from Convocation presented their preliminary draft of a response. You can imagine them sort of huddling and deciding, "Alright, this guy is clearly angry. We've got to do something to placate him." The result was a document entitled "The Submission of the Clergy" in May 1532. This document gave Henry the right to summon Convocation and approve or veto all of its legislation. In other words, this document made Henry VIII the effective head of the Church of England.

Not everyone realized the implications of this. This is back room dealing going on in Westminster. Thomas More did. He resigned the Lord Chancellorship the next day. Thomas Cromwell was now the king's undisputed first minister. Over the next few months, he and Parliament spelled out the Royal Supremacy in legislation and in action.

Once again, the catalyst is Anne Boleyn. In December 1532, Anne becomes pregnant. In January of 1533, she and Henry are secretly married. At this point, you're saying, "Well, wait a minute, isn't Henry still married to

Catherine?" Not in Henry's eyes, he isn't. Remember, that marriage is invalid in his eyes, but now the king really needed everyone else to go along with it.

In the spring of 1533, Parliament passes the Act in Restraint of Appeals. This declared that England was an empire, governed by one supreme head and king. It forbade English subjects, therefore, from appealing to any foreign jurisdiction. From this point, there was only one sovereign power in England—one chain, with one earthly head. The pope's power in England was now legally a dead letter.

As we'll see, this piece of legislation has sometimes been viewed as the capstone of the Tudor attempt to get everyone to behave—the Tudor attempt to prevent another War of the Roses and get everyone lined up. More immediately, what it did was it meant that the divorce case could now only be heard in England. In May 1533, Cromwell, now Archbishop of Canterbury, heard the divorce case and pronounced the marriage of Henry and Catherine to be null and void. Nobody was terribly surprised about that.

In June, Anne was crowned. In September, she gave birth to a girl named Elizabeth. This time the king did not conceal his disappointment. You're perhaps familiar with that wonderful scene in Shakespeare's *Henry VIII* (actually, it's a play that Shakespeare probably only contributed to) in which Elizabeth has been born, and a great speech is pronounced over her about the glories that she will bring to the realm. In real life, nobody thought that at the time.

In 1533–1534, Parliament spelt out the new order further by passing a new Act of Succession declaring Mary illegitimate and reserving the succession to the offspring of Anne's body. This new act also made it treason to deny the succession in writing, print, deed, or act. The year 1534 also saw a new act of supremacy explicitly naming Henry Supreme Head of the Church, and an Act in Restraint of Annates, which diverted Church taxes into Henry's coffers.

Finally, the year closed with a new treason act, which made it a capital crime to question the succession or the king's title, or to call the king or queen

a heretic, infidel, tyrant, or usurper. You don't suppose they were worried about something, do you? Do they sound a little worried? By the way, notice that this law makes words treason—just saying those things is treason. That was a new wrinkle in English law.

In 1535–1536, Cromwell, as the king's Vicar-General in Ecclesiastical Affairs, orders the imprisonment of clergy who preach against the Royal Supremacy; the erasure of the pope's name from mass books; the destruction of shrines and images; and the placement of Bibles newly translated by William Tyndale and Myles Coverdale in all churches.

In 1536, the Crown began to dissolve the monasteries. This was a religious revolution. How did English men and women, all of whom grew up in the Old Church, react to it? By and large, they didn't react at all. Most aristocrats swore the oath. Perhaps they were afraid of Henry. Perhaps they were afraid of losing their lands. Perhaps they just didn't see the difference. Bishops and many parish clergy went along. Only one bishop opposed. Most ordinary people who were asked to swear the oath did as well. Maybe Cromwell's preaching propaganda campaign worked. Maybe they were just as afraid of a female succession as Henry was. Maybe Henry was more popular than the pope. Again, maybe they didn't notice the difference.

But there were objectors. The most prominent were Sir Thomas More and Bishop Fisher. They had no trouble with the new succession. What Henry wanted to do with the succession was his business, but they could not deny the validity of the first marriage. That would be denying their Catholic faith, in their view. Eventually, both men were charged with treason, namely denying the new order of succession. More, in particular, defended himself brilliantly at his trial, but both were convicted on perjured evidence and finally executed in the summer of 1535. More's famous dying words: "I die the king's good servant, but God's first," are a rejection of the unitary sovereignty of the Act in Restraint of Appeals that says the king rules an empire and there's only one jurisdiction.

There are a couple of ironies here. One is that Thomas More is usually held up as a kind of patron saint of dying for conscience. More didn't die for his conscience. Remember that he quite enthusiastically burnt people at the stake

for theirs. More died for the pope's right to tell you what your conscience ought to believe. The man with the conscience, ironically, is Henry VIII, who has a scruple about his marriage.

The other irony, of course, is that Henry silenced these men so that he wouldn't face more criticism about his divorce and Royal Supremacy, but of course, they became martyrs celebrated abroad for their brave deaths.

What about the countryside? Was there anybody else who opposed the king? Many parish clergy, braver than their bishops, did resist, preaching against the changes. A handful of Carthusian monks refused to go along and were tortured and executed as a result. Elizabeth Barton, the Holy Maid of Kent, went around predicting that if Henry went ahead with the divorce, he'd be dead within a year. Instead, she was attainted by Parliament, and she ended up dead within the year.

The most dramatic and dangerous example of resistance was the Pilgrimage of Grace. The Pilgrimage of Grace was actually one of a number of rebellions that took place in the North. One of the things we'll find in this course is that the North was always the most enthusiastically Catholic part of England. What that has to do with climate, terrain, and being more remote from London is perhaps anybody's guess, but something's probably there.

This rebellion spread to Cumberland, Durham, Lancashire, Northumberland, and Westmoreland before the year 1536 was out. Historians have long debated what this rebellion was really about. On the surface, it would seem that it's about religion. The pilgrims wore a badge depicting the five wounds of Christ. They processed behind religious banners. They made religious demands, such as repudiation of heretical innovations and recognition of papal authority. They wanted, rather touchingly, Mary reinstated in the succession.

England was also experiencing an outbreak of plague at this time, as well as flooding and poor harvests. In fact, the mid-1530s saw the beginning of an inflation in England that was making relatively humble people more and more poor.

There were also economic demands in the Pilgrimage of Grace. They wanted fair rents and a halt to enclosures. They also called for the dismissal of Thomas Cromwell, which I think fits either interpretation. In fact, the rebels seem to have felt, if you look carefully at the demands (and this is often true of Tudor rebels), that everything they were protesting was Thomas Cromwell's fault. In other words, the king was surrounded by bad advisors. They loved the king. They were sure that the king, their father, if he only knew how they felt about this, would get rid of Cromwell, go back to his first wife, and go back to his religion too. They were sure that the king would listen to them, and it was just these "evil" men like Cromwell that were poisoning his mind.

The rebels had all the more reason to believe these comforting delusions because Henry did not crush the revolt immediately. He tried to. He sent the Duke of Norfolk out, who met the rebels at Doncaster Bridge in Yorkshire, in October 1536. When Norfolk got there, he realized that he was hopelessly outnumbered. Instead of attacking the rebels, he sat down and negotiated with them. He promised to take their demands back to the king, which of course fed this idea that the king is our loving father—paternalism and deference. Surely, he'll listen and take care of us.

When Norfolk got back to court, Henry was furious. He wanted these people eliminated, but Norfolk had made a promise in his name, so Henry waited and built up his forces. Sure enough, the rebels became active again in the spring. This gave Henry the opportunity to move against them. By the way, he also moved against a number of northern peers, like Lord Darcy, who did not suppress the rebellion when they were asked to do so. Darcy was a Catholic and he kind of temporized.

That spring, a new series of outbreaks were the excuse Henry needed. He now seized his chance to crush the rebels. [Robert] Aske and about 180 of his followers were executed. The Pilgrimage of Grace was crushed.

There are many conclusions to draw from all these events. One, Henry's reaction to the Pilgrimage of Grace reminds us that Tudor rule was firm, ruthless, and unscrupulous. To forget that was to invite the greatest peril.

Henry was ultimately in control, but he was not unwilling to let his advisors take the blame for policies that were unpopular.

The second big thing that I'd like you to remember out of this is that most of the country didn't rebel. Most of the country simply went along with the divorce and the Royal Supremacy. That suggests that most people either didn't see the implications of what was happening, or they felt more loyalty to bluff King Hal than they did to the pope, Princess Mary, the old religion, or Queen Catherine.

Finally, I'd like you to note the increasing importance of economic issues that we brought up in talking about the Pilgrimage of Grace. From now on, religious policy, high politics, diplomacy, and the succession would also all be bound up not only with each other, but with the state of the English economy. Aske and his fellow pilgrims understood that relationship. They didn't understand much, but they understood that. So did Thomas Cromwell.

# A Tudor Revolution: 1536–47?

## Lecture 12

**G. R. Elton ... argued that the gentlemen and peasants who embarked upon the Pilgrimage of Grace were on to something when they connected religious with political and economic issues. While they were mistaken in letting Henry off the hook, they were more than half right in viewing Thomas Cromwell as the engineer of a new and very different world.**

In 1953, G. R. Elton published *The Tudor Revolution in Government*. He argued that the break from Rome implied an expansion of the power of the monarchy and, therefore, the state, in many areas of English life. To achieve their ends, Henry and Cromwell had to reconfigure the power of Parliament, reorganize central and local government, and increase their responsibilities, in effect, creating the first modern nation-state, run by the first real government bureaucracy. Since 1953, historians have argued vigorously about these claims, and the broadest ones have largely been rejected. Still, something remarkable was going on in Henrician England.

The key to the Tudor Revolution lies in the prologue to the Act in Restraint of Appeals of 1533, which calls England “an empire ... governed by one supreme head and king.” In this context, *empire* means what the Romans called *imperium*, the power to give commands and have them obeyed. Thus, the act states that there was no higher power, jurisdiction, or loyalty—not papal, tribal, feudal, or local—than that of and to the sovereign. According to the Great Chain of Being, there had been many human chains of authority (the church, towns, the family) that competed with the principal human chain of king, nobles, gentry, and so on. Henry and Cromwell eliminated that competition by assuming control of the Church chain and subordinating all the others. Thus, they created something akin to the modern nation-state, with impermeable borders and clear lines of authority and loyalty.

But in order to do this, Henry and Cromwell had called on parliamentary statute. They probably wanted the appearance of consent for so bold a statement. This rendered England, in some sense, a constitutional monarchy. Parliament was the junior partner, but still a partner. Moreover, Parliament’s



share in the partnership had increased to include religion and, as we shall see, social welfare. This meant that some future, weaker king than Henry might find his sovereignty challenged.

To make effective the king's *imperium*, Henry and Cromwell launched a series of government reforms. In making himself indispensable to the king, Cromwell raised the importance of his office, Royal Secretary, laying the foundation for the modern office of Secretary of State. Henry reduced the Council to 20, making it a true "Privy Council." After 1540, it had its own clerk and minute book. Cromwell reduced the power of the inefficient Exchequer, giving much of the revenue to a series of law courts, answerable to Cromwell.

Henry and Cromwell's toughest task was to try to impose their *imperium* on areas beyond the center. Most of the territory ruled by the Tudors was "borderland," far from London geographically and culturally, such as the North, Wales, and Ireland. In the North, the main area of tension was the 110-mile border with Scotland. The Crown abolished liberties and franchises independent of the king's authority, such as that at Durham. It revived and strengthened the Council of the North, thus marginalizing the great peers who had sometimes challenged the monarchy and proven so unreliable during the Pilgrimage of Grace.

Wales was a tangled web of jurisdictions between the south and west, ruled on the king's behalf by the Marcher Lords, and the north, ruled by the king's son, the Prince of Wales, but as we recall, Henry did not have one. Worse, the native rural population resented English interlopers. Here, Cromwell engineered an Act of Union (1536). This and subsequent legislation abolished the Principality and Marcher Lords; imposed the English system of shires, sheriffs, justices of the peace, and so on; abolished Welsh law in favor of English; and eliminated any distinction between English and Welsh subjects.

Technically, the King of England was overlord over all of Ireland. In reality, his authority was strong only in the area around Dublin, known as the Pale. Beyond it, real power lay with two often-feuding groups, neither particularly loyal to the Crown: the Gaelic-Irish clan leaders, especially powerful in the

north and west, and the Anglo-Irish descendants of English colonists who had intermarried with the natives, controlling the south and east. Traditionally, late-medieval English kings had relied on an Anglo-Irish Lord Deputy, usually the current Earl of Kildare, to keep a lid on things. Unfortunately, the Tudors found the Earls of Kildare to be unreliable and, in 1533, rebellious. Henry and Cromwell suppressed the rebellion and executed the tenth Earl of Kildare in 1537. They passed an Act of Supremacy for Ireland, making Henry Supreme Head of the (Protestant) Church of Ireland. They initiated a policy by which clan leaders would surrender their lands to Henry and receive them back, with noble titles. They established a garrison in Dublin.

The outcomes of these policies were mixed. The North remained an area of instability. Wales was successfully integrated into the English system politically, socially, economically, and even to some extent, culturally. Ireland remained resistant to both Protestant reformation and royal authority. This culminated in a series of revolts in the 1560s–1590s.

At home, Cromwell sought to use the Crown's growing powers to promote a broader concept of social welfare. England was facing massive socioeconomic problems in the mid-1530s. The population was growing faster than the economy could

provide jobs. Food prices and rents were also rising, creating more poverty and increasing the numbers of beggars and vagrants. The church institutions that had traditionally regulated the economy (guilds) and distributed charity (the monasteries, see below) were being weakened or eliminated by the Crown. Cromwell's solution was to promote a Poor Law (1536), which authorized local authorities to raise funds for "the deserving poor," that is, the sick, widows, children, and others. This was the first step toward a system of public welfare in Europe.

The dissolution of the monasteries was the capstone of the Tudor Revolution, because this was how it was all to be paid for. In 1536, the government began to investigate the state of the monasteries in England. The ostensible reason

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**The monasteries owned 15 percent of the land in England. Cromwell's plan was to claim this for the Crown and wipe out Henry's money troubles with one blow.**

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was church reform. But, in fact, Henry and Cromwell had already made up their minds to close all the monasteries. The real motivation was that the monasteries owned 15 percent of the land in England. Cromwell's plan was to claim this for the Crown and wipe out Henry's money troubles with one blow.

These policies had unforeseen consequences. Some 10,000 monks and nuns were evicted from their vocations. Priceless artwork was destroyed, metalwork was melted down, libraries were dispersed, and buildings were razed or ransacked. Church-run hospitals, schools, and charitable institutions were abolished, putting more pressure on the Crown and local authorities to fill the gap. The Crown received some £90,000 a year for several years. However, a series of invasion scares (1538–1540) and another war in France (1542) caused Henry to begin to sell off his newly acquired lands. Thus, in the long term, the Crown remained poor. This land was bought by nobles, gentlemen, and yeomen who thereby rose into the ranks of the gentry. The end result of the dissolution of the monasteries was, therefore, not to endow the Crown, but to enrich and expand the ruling elite. This had two further repercussions: It increased the power of that elite in relation to the Crown, not least because the latter would have to ask their representatives in Parliament for money. It reconciled the elite to the Reformation. A revival of Catholicism would be a non-starter with them if it meant giving up their monastic lands.

Cromwell's legacy was mixed. Some of his policies actually revived Yorkist policies (for example, the use of councils to tame borderlands). Some were soon reversed (for example, his de-emphasis of the Exchequer). Some failed miserably (Ireland). Some were highly ambiguous in intent or effect. He sought to empower and enrich the Crown by breaking the power of Rome and the great nobles in England. But in order to do this, he empowered Parliament and enriched the landed gentry. He sought to wean the country away from papal Catholicism. But that does not mean that he succeeded in making it Protestant. ■

## Suggested Reading

Bucholz and Key, *Early Modern England*, chap. 2, sec. 5.

Coleman and Starkey, *Revolution Reassessed*.

Elton, *Tudor Revolution in Government*.

Guy, *Tudor England*, chap. 6.

## Questions to Consider

1. In making the king more powerful, was Cromwell empowering the man or the office? Henry or that abstraction called the Crown?
2. How much of the Tudor Revolution do you think was part of a conscious plan on Henry's part? On Cromwell's? How much was a reaction to immediate necessities?

# A Tudor Revolution: 1536–47?

## Lecture 12—Transcript

In the last lecture, we traced the steps taken by Henry VIII and Thomas Cromwell to end the power of the papacy in England and establish the king as supreme head of its church. Some historians have argued that this was actually all part of an even larger Tudor plan to increase the power and efficiency of the monarchy, not only in religion, but in all areas of English life.

This lecture will examine that possibility. It addresses the role of Parliament in this process; Cromwell's various administrative reforms; the attempts to tame the Scottish border, the Welsh Marches, and Ireland; the creation of the first Poor Law; and the dissolution of the monasteries, which was intended to pay for it all. This lecture will conclude by assessing what of these policies stuck—what worked and what didn't.

In 1953, a Cambridge historian named G.R. Elton published *The Tudor Revolution in Government*. In this book, he argued that the gentlemen and peasants who embarked upon the Pilgrimage of Grace were on to something when they connected religious with political and economic issues. While they were mistaken in letting Henry off the hook, they were more than half right in viewing Thomas Cromwell as the engineer of a new and very different world.

According to Elton, Henry VIII and Cromwell did more than just reorder England's religious life in the mid-1530s. Rather, in order to break from Rome, but also as a partial consequence of the break, the king and his chief minister had to expand the power of the monarchy, and therefore the state, in many aspects of English life. In order to do that, they had to reconfigure the power of Parliament, reorganize central and local government, and increase their responsibilities. This amounted to a revolution in the relationship between the Crown and its subjects.

Put simply, according to Elton, Henry and Cromwell had created the first modern nation-state, run by the first real government bureaucracy.

Since 1953, historians have argued vigorously about these claims. This is one of the major debates in Tudor history. The broadest ones have largely been rejected. Still, Elton was right that something remarkable was going on in Henrician England. We're going to examine it.

The key to the Tudor Revolution lies in a new conception of sovereignty as expressed in the prologue to the Act in Restraint of Appeals of 1533. You'll remember that this act begins by calling England "an empire ... governed by one supreme head and king." In this context, *empire* does not mean that England has vast overseas territories. What Cromwell is referring to is the old Roman concept of *imperium*: the power of a ruler to give commands and have them obeyed. What Henry and Cromwell are saying is that there was no higher power in England than its sovereign. No other jurisdiction—not papal, not tribal, not feudal, and not local—could supersede his jurisdiction. There was therefore no other loyalty that could countervail loyalty to the Crown.

You'll remember that according to the old medieval world view embodied in the Great Chain of Being, there were actually multiple human chains of authority. There were the Church, the towns, and the family, which competed with the principal human chain of king, nobles, gentry, etc. What Henry and Cromwell have done is eliminate that competition. They've assumed control of the Church chain, and they've subordinated all the others.

Thus, they created something akin to a modern nation-state with impermeable borders—you can't appeal your case to Rome—and clear lines of authority and loyalty. But there's an irony or paradox at the heart of the Tudor Revolution. Remember where Henry and Cromwell did this. They did it in Parliament. To do this, to get all this legislation (for example, making it treason to call the king a heretic), they had to turn to Parliament to establish their unitary sovereignty.

Why did they do this? Why didn't the king just proclaim, "I'm now head of the Church of England. That's it." He could have done so. The thinking was probably going back to Henry VII's and an even older principle that you've got to govern with consent. This was a big change, throwing the pope out of England. Henry and Cromwell could always say that they did it at the request

of Parliament. Do you remember “The Commons Supplication against the Ordinaries”? Do you remember the House of Commons had asked them to reform the Church? This was just the end result of that.

Remember that the Lancastrians and the Yorkists had fallen in part because they lost the support of the country. Henry and Cromwell did not want to take that chance. Of course, having gone to Parliament, this meant that Henry was in a sense not absolute—that England was in some sense a constitutional monarchy. There’s a paradox here. Even Henry VIII said, “We at no time stand so highly in our royal estate as in the time of Parliament.” He’s most powerful when he’s operating as king in Parliament.

This doesn’t mean that Henry ever intended to share sovereignty or accept parliamentary limitations on his power. Parliament was the junior partner, but after all, it was now a partner. According to Elton, Henry and Cromwell have just increased the importance and the power of Parliament as they have done the Crown itself.

Remember that Parliament already had secured the right to approve or disapprove of taxes. Parliament had the power of the purse. Now Parliament had added religion to its brief. Moreover, as part of the Tudor Revolution, we’re going to see that Parliament is going to be asked to play a greater role in social and economic policies.

You might think that this was a fatal error and that Henry would now have to deal with an unruly or demanding Parliament, but he was Henry VIII. Henry never had to deal with an unruly or demanding Parliament. In fact, Henrician Parliaments were pretty much the lap dog of Henry and Cromwell, as far as I can see.

As with Edward III’s concessions, which remember were also made to Parliament so that he could get things done, what Henry has done is set up a situation in which some future monarch, weaker than Henry and without Henry’s tremendous presence to face down opposition, might have to deal with a Parliament that thinks it has the right to decide on religious matters and money. Of course, money implies foreign policy matters, peace and war,

whether you have an army—all sorts of implications. It could be argued that the king has set up trouble for his descendants in the future.

In the meantime, Cromwell sought to make Henry's *imperium* effective throughout his empire. To do that, he had to take the medieval government that Henry had inherited from his forebears and make it more efficient. Cromwell and Henry launch a series of governmental reforms. Elton would have argued that these reforms were designed to create the modern bureaucratic state, but more recent historians have found in them a more ad hoc attempt on Cromwell's part to make the king, but also to make Cromwell, more powerful. That is to say, these reforms tend to make Cromwell more the center of government as well as the king whom he serves.

Take his position of secretary. He was the king's secretary. Cromwell was so indispensable to the government—to Henry's program—that he virtually elevated single-handedly this position into that of Secretary of State (the phrase isn't used yet, but it will be). Cromwell is a virtual Secretary of State. Here's a reform that actually does improve the bureaucratic nature of the English state, but it also increases Cromwell's power.

Elton used to give Cromwell credit too for launching a reform of the Council. Under Henry VIII, the Council was boiled down to about 20 effective members, making it a true "Privy Council." That's the phrase we'll use from now on. After 1540, it had its own clerk and its own minute book. In fact, again, more recent research shows that Henry actually did this as a counterweight to Cromwell, so that he would have an alternative path from Cromwell for advice to reach him. He wasn't going to make the same mistake he made with Wolsey.

Cromwell also sought to make the king's finances more efficient and responsive. He did this starting in 1537 by asking all revenue departments to declare their income and state their available balances. You're listening to this and you're saying, "This is new?" In fact, it was. Never before had the Departments of State been asked to do this. Never before had they been asked to simply state how much money they had and how much was available for the king to use. Kings rarely in the past had had knowledge of how much money they had at any given time.



Cromwell also reduced the power of the Exchequer. I told you that the Exchequer tended to be a rather antiquated and cumbersome bureaucracy, so he actually took money out of the Exchequer and distributed it to a series of courts, which were more responsive to the king's will, but also to Cromwell's will.

Cromwell also made sure that he was master of the king's jewel house, which means that he was in charge of the royal privy coffers. Yes, there really were chests under the bed into which the king or his chief minister could delve.

Cromwell also sought to make the king's power more effective not only at the center, but in outlying areas. One way of thinking of Henry's realm is to think of most of England being frontier. If you stop and think about it, there's that bit around London in the Southeast that is pretty responsive to the king's will. Remember the Pilgrimage of Grace? The whole of the North, all of Wales, and Ireland, which if you add them all together actually comprise the majority of the king's realm, are frontier.

You may remember from previous lectures that in general in dealing with the frontier, the king has relied on a few great nobles—a few great landowners. These landowners often proved to be unreliable. Remember the Earl of Warwick and Richard, Duke of Gloucester, under the Yorkists? Or the Earl of Kildare, supporting Lambert Simnel under Henry VII? Then there was Lord Darcy's prevarication during the Pilgrimage of Grace.

In fact, some of Henry's realms didn't acknowledge his authority at all. There were what were called "independent franchises." I suppose the closest thing we have are non-incorporated towns, but this isn't quite the same thing. For example, within the diocese of Chester or the diocese of Durham, all legal officers acted in the name of the bishop, not the king. In these parts of the realm, the king's writ did not run. What the king wanted to have happen didn't necessarily happen, unless he had the cooperation of the bishop.

Cromwell said, "Enough of this." He launches a reform of the local administration of England, which is designed to reduce everybody to being under the king's authority. I'm going to go through the various parts of the frontier briefly, starting with the North. Here the main area of tension was

the 110-mile border with Scotland. Even when England and Scotland were at peace, tenants and clansmen from both sides engaged in violent border raids.

Traditionally, English kings had relied on a few great nobles, usually from the Percy family, Earls of Northumberland, or the Nevills, Earls of Westmoreland. As usual, these nobles had not always been loyal. You'll remember that the Percies, for example, had rebelled against Henry IV.

In response, Cromwell secured acts of Parliament, first abolishing the independent franchises of Chester and Durham. He also pressured the childless Henry Percy, Earl of Northumberland, who died in 1537, to make the king his heir. I'm sure that was done out of great love for Henry VIII. He also revived and strengthened the Council of the North, which was a council that was not made up solely of peers. It was a council that in effect marginalized the power of individual noblemen in the North.

Turning to Wales: Wales was a tangled web of jurisdictions. Theoretically, the south and west were ruled on the king's behalf by about 130 Marcher Lords. The northern part was supposed to be ruled by the king's son, the Prince of Wales. That's right, you may remember that one of Henry VIII's problems is that he doesn't have a son. This is an invitation to do something about Wales.

The Marcher Lords themselves often seemed to be out for themselves. Lawlessness was increased by the fact that Welsh law was pretty relaxed about physical violence and inheritance rights. Worse, the native population resented English interlopers based in cities.

Here, Cromwell decided to make Wales a fully integrated part of the English state. He engineered an Act of Union, which was passed in 1536. This and later laws abolished the Principality and the Marcher Lords. They imposed the full English system of shires, sheriffs, JPs, etc. Welsh law and language were abolished in the courts in favor of English. At the same time, any distinction between English and Welsh subjects was also eliminated, so there's an argument here that the Welsh actually received a sort of increase in status from this. I should also point out that the Welsh language itself was not proscribed in society generally.

Ireland was always, of course, the thorniest problem. Technically, the King of England was overlord over all Ireland. In reality, his authority was only strong in the area around Dublin, known as the Pale. Within this area, the king's rule was effective. There was even an Irish Parliament, which according to Poyning's Law of 1494 could do nothing without the permission of the Parliament at Westminster in London. The Pale was pretty much under the king's thumb.

Beyond the Pale, real power lay with two groups. There were the Anglo-Irish lords, descendants of the first English colonists in the Middle Ages who had intermarried with natives. Despite this connection, they tended to look down on the Gaelic-Irish. They were theoretically loyal to the Crown, and they ruled an area called the Obedient Lands, to the south and east of the Pale. They ruled it with about the same amount of loyalty as the Marcher Lords did in Wales. Sometimes they were obedient. Sometimes they attacked the Gaelic-Irish. Sometimes they allied with them against the Crown.

Then, there were the Gaelic-Irish clan leaders who felt no loyalty to the King of England at all, or to each other. They ruled and fought each other in the north and west of the island, which was known to contemporaries as "wild Ireland."

Naturally, the feuds and rivalries between these two groups made Ireland very difficult to rule. Traditionally, English kings had relied on an Irish Lord Deputy. You'll remember our friendly Earl of Kildare who supported Lambert Simnel and burnt down the Cathedral at Cashel. That story reminds us of the problems of relying on an Irish Lord Deputy.

His successor, Gerald Fitzgerald, the ninth Earl of Kildare (the predecessor was also Gerald Fitzgerald), built up a vast clientage network in Ireland through marriage alliances with Gaelic clans. This made him powerful, but also imperious; resented by the Anglo-Irish lords, but also suspected by the Crown. In particular, the Butlers, Earls of Ormond, often intrigued with him at court. That started a process that would lead to an explosion in Ireland.

In 1533, the Butlers, intriguing against Kildare, got him recalled to London to justify his conduct. Later that year, a false rumor reached Ireland that

Kildare had been executed. His son, Lord Offaly, also known as “Silken Thomas,” decided to raise a rebellion. Offaly called upon everyone he could think of to help. He called on the pope, since Henry was of course beginning to push the Reformation. He called on the Anglo-Irish lords, who were a little bit suspicious. He called on the Gaelic chieftains.

The Butlers rallied to the Crown and Dublin held out, and an English army defeated the rebels in 1534, as it had done so many times in the past. That’s the point. You see, Offaly surrendered to the English army on a promise that his life would be spared. If Cromwell and Henry were going to pursue the policies of Henry’s father and previous English kings, Offaly’s life would have been spared. He would have received a rap on the knuckles, gone back to his ancestral lands, and everyone would have gone back to square one.

Instead, Henry and Cromwell decided to do something different. They executed Offaly along with five of his uncles in 1537. He was by this time the tenth Earl of Kildare, because his father had died of natural causes. Henry then promoted the Protestant Reformation by passing an Act of Supremacy for Ireland. They established a garrison in Dublin, and in 1541, Henry assumed the title of King of Ireland. The only positive that Henry offered to the Irish was a policy called “Surrender and Regrant,” by which Gaelic lords, if they wanted, could surrender all their lands to Henry. He would give them back and an English title in return for their allegiance.

These policies had mixed results. The North remained an area of instability. Scotland and England would continue to fight each other on the border until a pro-English government took power in Scotland in the 1560s.

Wales, on the other hand, was successfully integrated into the English system politically, socially, economically, and even to some extent culturally. The ruling elite, maybe because they were treated as near equals by the English former conquerors, began to feel a part of the English polity. There was no attempt to prevent the Welsh from speaking their native Gaelic language, and the Reformation proceeded in part because the English very early on realized the importance of translating Scriptures into Welsh.

The relationship between Wales and the rest of England for the rest of this course is actually reasonably happy. If the Welsh people today feel that they want independence, that is very largely the result of a movement that began in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Then there's Ireland. Cromwell's policies tightened royal control, but they provoked resentment and distrust. The Anglo-Irish and Gaelic aristocrats continued to be jealous of each other, and those resentments wrecked "Surrender and Regrant." Most native Irish remained Catholic, not least because English Protestants did not translate the Bible into Gaelic-Irish until the 17<sup>th</sup> century. English clergymen had no interest in proselytizing in "wild Ireland." As a result, the Irish remained Catholic. As a result of that, there was yet another major difference between them and their English masters.

The garrison that Cromwell established was ruinously expensive and was thought to be oppressive by the natives. The cosmetic change in Henry's title of course changed nothing.

The pattern of Anglo-Irish relations had been set for the future: religious friction, misunderstanding, mistrust, betrayal, violence, rebellion, revenge, harsh suppression, and military occupation. This situation would only grow worse, culminating in a series of rebellions in the 1560s and 1590s. More about that anon.

Cromwell's revolution was in some respects more benign at home. Being a powerful man and a man of ideas, Thomas Cromwell found himself surrounded by a group of young writers whom he encouraged. They've sometimes been known as the "Commonwealth Men." The Commonwealth Men had this remarkable idea: They thought that rural government ought to exist not to win glory for the monarch and not to conquer foreign territory, but, in their revolutionary idea, to improve the lives of the people whom the king ruled. It's astounding, isn't it?

Cromwell wanted the Crown to take over the business of regulating the economy and providing welfare. In 1536, he promoted a Poor Law, which authorized local officials to raise funds to provide for "the deserving poor," that is, the sick, the widows, children, etc. It distinguished these from

sturdy beggars, “the undeserving poor,” able-bodied men who, it seemed to contemporaries, refused to work.

At this point, I need to explain a little bit of context. First, you must understand that people in the 16<sup>th</sup> century did not understand economics. They didn’t understand the laws of supply and demand. They didn’t understand that England was currently experiencing a population boom in the 1520s and 1530s that would last into the 1640s and 1650s. They didn’t understand that because there were more people, the labor market in England was flooded. The English economy wasn’t flexible enough to absorb all of those new people. That helps to explain why there were more unemployed people and why there were more sturdy beggars standing on the street corner.

Cromwell wanted to do something about these people, but he didn’t know what. He certainly didn’t think they were being thrown out of work because of circumstances beyond their control. He thought they were just lazy, hence a Poor Law that distinguishes sturdy beggars from the deserving poor, those who obviously cannot work: women, children, the lame, the halt, and the sick.

This Poor Law only authorizes the collection of taxes for the purpose of helping the poor. It doesn’t actually force anybody to do that. You could argue that this Poor Law is rather cruel, and we will explore the cruelties and mercies of the Poor Law in Lecture Twenty-Five. The point I want to make now is that this is the first time in Europe since Roman times, as far as I can see, that a government has assumed responsibility for the public welfare of the poor. Every other government in Europe leaves this to the Church. Cromwell and Henry are taking it on themselves. They have taken the first step towards the welfare state.

One reason they did that was that the economy was going south. Another reason they did that was that they were attacking at that very moment the traditional institution that used to take care of the poor people: the Church.

I now come to the capstone of the Tudor Revolution in government: the dissolution of the monasteries. In 1536, the government set out a commission to investigate the state of the smaller monasteries in England. There were

about 400 of these. They would continue with the 200 larger monasteries in 1539.

The ostensible reason for examining these monasteries was Church reform. “We’ve heard there’s corruption in the Church. We’ve heard there’s corruption in the monasteries. We want to find out about vice and scandal.” In fact, the commissioners didn’t find all that much vice and scandal, which is kind of disappointing. It would have provided some good quotes for this lecture.

What they did find was kind of a loss of direction—vows of poverty and duties to teach and give charity that were not really being fulfilled. Lay bequests were drying up. Recruitment was dwindling. There’s a sense that the monasteries were, if not on their last legs, going through a period of being in the doldrums.

In fact, the impulse to examine the monasteries had nothing to do with religion. Henry and Cromwell had already decided that they were going to dissolve the monasteries whatever the commissioners found. The reason they wanted to dissolve the monasteries was that the monasteries owned 15 percent of the land in England, as well as priceless physical plant, libraries, and artwork. Cromwell’s plan was that the money and land acquired in the dissolution of the monasteries would endow the monarchy to take on all these new tasks that were part of the Tudor Revolution in government. “We can feed the poor if we have the money from the monasteries. We can assert our authority in Ireland. We can pay for that garrison. We can impose unitary sovereignty if we have the money from the monasteries.”

According to one critic, “The false flatterer says he will make the king the richest prince in Christendom.” Of course, the “false flatterer” is Thomas Cromwell.

Did it work? What were the results? Some 10,000 monks and nuns were evicted from their vocations. Monks were pensioned off, and nuns were told to return to their families, undoubtedly a cruel joke to older women whose families had probably died off. Priceless artwork was destroyed, metalwork melted down, libraries dispersed, and buildings razed or ransacked.

Further legislation in 1547 completed this work by abolishing Church-run hospitals, schools, and charitable institutions. This made the Reformation easier to accomplish, because it got rid of a lot of the physical plant of the Church, but it also put more pressure on the Crown to come up with a Poor Law and to take care of all the people who are now not being taken care of.

The Crown did receive some £90,000 a year for the first few years. Then, after 1540, Henry decided that since he had money again, he'd like to get involved in another war. In 1542, he attacks the French again. By this time, for reasons I'll explain in the next lecture, Thomas Cromwell was no longer able to advise him. Cromwell is no longer able to put a break on Henry's spending, so Henry decides that he needs to raise money quickly. He decides to sell off all the monastic land. He's going to sell his endowment. He sells it to yeomen and gentlemen who have a little bit of money to spend.

The end result of the dissolution of the monasteries is not to endow the Crown, but to enrich and expand the ruling elite. This had three further repercussions. One, because of the flood of new land, the percentage of aristocrats, meaning gentlemen and nobles, in England goes from 0.5 percent to 2 percent of the population. That's an amazing change, though they're still a terribly small minority.

Second, this increases the power of that elite. Remember, the king, not being endowed, is going to have to call on Parliament for more money.

The third and most important significance of selling off the monastic lands is that it turned the landed aristocracy of England into Protestants. Think about it: You've now acquired these lovely monastic estates. Are you likely to stand for a Catholic Restoration? I think not.

In the end, Elton's theory has some flaws. Some of Cromwell's policies were actually revivals of old Yorkist policies, for example, the use of regional councils to police the "borderlands." Some of his policies were reversed. His de-emphasis of the Exchequer was reversed in subsequent reigns. Some of his policies failed miserably, like Ireland. Some were highly ambiguous in intent or effect. He wanted to empower the Crown by breaking the power of Rome and of the great nobles in England, but in the end, he empowered



Parliament and the landed gentry. Cromwell wanted to make the Crown rich, but Henry's actions squandered this wealth. This too would empower Parliament, which retained the power of the purse, and the landed gentry.

Thomas Cromwell wanted to wean the country away from papal Catholicism and this he did, but that does not mean that he succeeded in making it Protestant. As we have seen in the case of the dissolution of the monasteries, Cromwell's best-laid plans might run afoul of the king's desires.

In the next lecture, Henry VIII will lose the steady influence of Cromwell and as a result, whole kingdoms and creeds will depend on his whim.

# The Last Years of Henry VIII: 1540–47

## Lecture 13

**Henry was a conservative in theology and his beliefs about church discipline. He always considered himself to be a good Catholic. He just didn't want to have to listen to the pope. Apart from the change at the top that he engineered, he wanted the Reformation to stop.**

**B**efore proceeding further, it is necessary to explain the fundamental differences between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism in the 16th century. This is made difficult by the facts that (1) Protestantism was never a single, unified faith and (2) these two faith traditions have changed markedly in 500 years.

The fundamental difference between Catholics and Protestants was in their source of authority, or religious truth. Catholics found religious truth in three sources:

- Scripture—but scripture was difficult to interpret, and most people could not read in any case. Therefore, the church reserved the interpretation of scripture to religious professionals.
- Tradition—that is, what the church had thought and done for centuries.
- Papal and conciliar decrees—that is, what the church hierarchy decided.

Protestants, noting the corruption in the church and the fallibility of human nature, relied on scripture alone. Strict Protestants rejected anything lacking a scriptural basis, including popes and bishops, along with elaborate rituals and church decor, such as crucifixes, images of saints, and so on.

This difference implies differences in structure. The structure of the Roman Catholic Church was hierarchical and complicated, because the discovery and dissemination of God's truth required learned professionals and strict

discipline of the laity. The structures of early Protestant churches were simple, with little hierarchy, because the Bible did not authorize it. Rather, if all one needed to know was to be found in scripture, then the church should be “a priesthood of all believers.” Given that the church hierarchy was obviously unscriptural and corrupt, Protestants saw the only hope for reform in secular authority, that is, righteous rulers, such as Henry.

These differences were reflected in each tradition’s attitude toward salvation. Catholics believed that salvation was won through faith and the performance of good works, especially the seven sacraments, which forgave sins (in three cases) and produced grace. Protestants believed that no human being could “win” salvation through his or her own efforts. Faith alone justified the individual in God’s eyes; sacraments might or might not be useful in inclining individuals toward God, but they did not automatically result in forgiveness or salvation. Other rituals, such as the sign of the cross, holy water, veneration of images, and so on, were mere superstition and idolatry. One Continental Protestant reformer, John Calvin, argued that an omniscient God has already decided who is saved or damned. Thus, some Protestants embraced predestination.

It might be assumed that, having thrown the pope out of England, Henry was an enthusiastic Protestant. In fact, he was uncomfortable with the seemingly democratic element in Protestantism. He was much more comfortable with Catholicism’s emphasis on hierarchy, ritual, and obedience. He just wanted to be at the top of that hierarchy, the center of that ritual, and the object of that obedience. Ironically, he soon found that only the Protestants surrounding Thomas Cromwell and Anne Boleyn embraced his royal supremacy with enthusiasm. Their ascendancy circa 1536 ensured a Protestant religious policy and a pro-French foreign policy.

The ascendancy of the Boleyn faction did not last long. France proved no more reliable an ally than the empire. Henry’s relationship to Anne went sour; he tired of her enthusiastic Protestantism. He was beginning to fall for Jane Seymour, also a Protestant. Then Anne miscarried a little boy in January 1536, and Catherine of Aragon died in the same month, thus clearing the way for Anne’s removal. That spring, Anne was accused of adultery and beheaded. Henry wed Jane Seymour in May 1536. In October 1537, she gave

birth to a son, Prince Edward. Twelve days later, she died of sepsis. Henry later claimed that he loved her best.

Henry's new single state gave Cromwell the opportunity to play matchmaker to the king, promote Protestantism, and secure the defense of the realm at the same time. This was especially pressing because the Catholic powers were threatening invasion. In 1539, the pope finally excommunicated Henry. This absolved good Catholic subjects of their loyalty to the "heretic king"; it gave France, Spain, and the Holy Roman Empire an excuse to attack him, as well.

In 1539, Francis I and Charles V made peace. In response, Cromwell sought an alliance with German Protestant princes who had long opposed Charles V. His strategy had two prongs:

- To promote Protestantism, thus showing Henry's solidarity with the German Protestant princes. As vicar-general in ecclesiastical affairs, Cromwell dissolved the monasteries and issued injunctions (1536, 1538) promoting the destruction of images, prayers in English, and the English Bible. Significantly, Henry neither opposed nor embraced these measures; he was taking a wait-and-see attitude on reform.
- To arrange a marriage with Anne, daughter of the powerful Duke of Cleves. But when she arrived in England in January 1540, Henry found her "dull of face and dull of wit." He went through with the marriage reluctantly, but it was never consummated.

Despite this failure, Cromwell appeared to be secure in the king's regard. In April 1540, the king named him Lord Chamberlain of the household and Earl of Essex. But a Catholic faction centered around the Howard family, led by the Duke of Norfolk and Bishop Stephen Gardiner, was working against Cromwell. They played on the failure of Cromwell's German strategy; Henry's growing fear that the Catholic powers would invade; and Henry's heart, which was falling for the vivacious and sensual 19-year-old Catherine Howard. While Cromwell ran the government, the Howards poisoned the

king's mind against him. This, plus his growing affection for Catherine and his desire to appease the Catholic powers, had several results:

- Henry used the proceeds from the sale of monastic lands to strengthen the Royal Navy and the coastal defenses.
- He backed away from Protestant reform.
- He seized and executed surviving Yorkist claimants to the throne, as well as Thomas Cromwell, Earl of Essex, in the summer of 1540.
- He divorced Anne of Cleves (on grounds of non-consummation) and married Catherine Howard at the same time.

Henry soon regretted the decisions of 1539–1540. In the spring of 1541, his government discovered a series of Catholic plots in the North. In the summer of 1541, France and the Holy Roman Empire resumed hostilities. This took the pressure off of Henry to appear Catholic. Without Cromwell to restrain him, he decided to join the war on the side of the emperor, attacking both Scotland and France. These martial adventures embittered Scotland and France and cost immense sums of money, wiping out what was left of the monastic nest egg and leading to a re-coinage, immense royal debt, and a wrecked national economy.

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**While Cromwell ran the government, the Howards poisoned the king's mind against him.**

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In the autumn of 1541, the Privy Council uncovered evidence of Queen Catherine's infidelity. Henry reluctantly ordered her execution in February 1542. In 1546, the Catholic Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey,

another descendant of Edward I, was executed for including the royal arms on his crest (a seeming threat to the claims of young Prince Edward). Henry became convinced that whatever his personal religious preferences, he could not trust Catholics to be loyal to his regime as he could Protestants. In July 1543, he married Catherine Parr, Lady Latimer, a middle-aged Protestant widow who proved a good mother to the royal children and to the aging king

himself. In 1546–1547 he named a Regency Council and set of tutors for his son made up of Protestants.

Henry VIII died on 25 January 1547, in his eyes, a good Catholic and a good king. But to provide his people with a male heir, he had started processes that would unleash the Protestant Reformation; wreck the economy; embitter the French, Scots, and Irish; and eventually, weaken the Crown he had sought to strengthen. ■

### Suggested Reading

Bucholz and Key, *Early Modern England*, chap. 3, secs. 1–3.

Guy, *Tudor England*, chap. 7.

Haigh, *English Reformations*, pt. II.

Scarbrick, *Henry VIII*, chaps. 11–15.

### Questions to Consider

1. Why did it take the pope so long to excommunicate Henry VIII?
2. Why did Thomas Cromwell fall? Was Henry's action justified? How might the last years of Henry's reign—and English history in general—have been different if Cromwell had remained in power?

# The Last Years of Henry VIII: 1540–47

## Lecture 13—Transcript

In the last lecture, we saw how Henry VIII and Thomas Cromwell sought to strengthen the authority and extend the competence of the Crown in areas of national life both traditional, like civil administration and defense of the realm, and new, like religion and social welfare.

None of this means that the basic questions about religion, foreign policy, or even the succession had been solved by the immediate break with Rome discussed in Lecture Eleven. This lecture takes up those themes in the king's last years. At its heart will be the mystery that every courtier tried to solve: What did Henry want?

In the mid-1530s, Henry VIII declared himself Supreme Head of the Church of England, severing his Church and its people from a thousand-year relationship with the papacy and appropriating a fair amount of its wealth. Contrary to popular belief, this does not mean that Henry VIII was a Protestant. As we shall see, Henry was a conservative in theology and his beliefs about Church discipline. He always considered himself to be a good Catholic. He just didn't want to have to listen to the pope. Apart from the change at the top that he engineered, he wanted the Reformation to stop.

There was a circle of religious conservatives at court, holdovers from the old Aragonese and middle factions, such as Bishop Stephen Gardiner, Cuthbert Tunstall, the Duke of Norfolk, and the Howard family, who encouraged him in this predilection: that the Reformation should stop with the Royal Supremacy.

But, as Nicholas Harpsfield wrote, to expect the Reformation to stop with the Royal Supremacy was “like one that would throw down a man headlong from the top of a high tower and bid him stay when he was halfway down.” In other words, once Henry sicked Parliament on the Church, once he countenanced the questioning of any aspect of Roman Catholicism, and once he broke that link in the Great Chain of Being with the pope, the whole structure was up for grabs, or at least reformers thought so. The Boleyn faction at court, led by Queen Anne, Archbishop Cranmer, and Secretary

Cromwell were sympathetic to this questioning. They wanted to push Henry toward Protestant reform.

During the last 10 years of the reign, various permutations of these two groups would fight over religious policy, foreign policy, and ultimately the king's soul. At its heart, they vied not only for the king's mind and ear, but they vied for the king's very outlook on religion and all of the most important aspects of life. The winner would possess the key to every Church door in England in this reign and the next.

Before proceeding further, it might be wise to review what the king's choices were, namely the fundamental differences between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. This is made difficult by two stubborn facts. First, Protestantism was never a single, unified faith. Second, these two faith traditions have changed markedly in the last 500 years, in many respects, I think, becoming more like each other.

If you yourself are Catholic or Protestant and listening to or viewing these tapes, and you don't necessarily recognize yourself in my description, please don't be offended. I'm trying to describe the fundamental differences between these two traditions at the very beginning of their conflict with each other.

In addressing what first separated Protestants from Catholics, some professors like to begin with their respective theologies of salvation, but I see their most fundamental disagreement in their source of religious truth. Catholics found religious truth—God's wish and will for good Christians—in three places: in Scripture, in Church tradition, and in papal and conciliar decrees.

First, Scripture: The medieval Church realized that Scripture is complicated. The Bible is obscure to some readers and contradictory to others. Throughout the Middle Ages, most people couldn't read anyway. The Church therefore reserved the interpretation of Scripture to religious professionals: to the pope, church councils, university theologians, and its priests. In theory, those priests received a careful theological training, though you may remember



from Lecture Eleven that the theory and the practice diverged. They were consecrated beings, rendered semi-sacred at their ordination.

The Church also kept the Bible in Latin, the fourth century Vulgate, and prohibited vernacular translation. It maintained a monopoly on this source of knowledge about God.

Another source of truth that Catholics believed in—truth about what God wanted—was simply tradition. What the Church had thought and done for the past thousand years was thought to accord with God’s will. The third source, as I indicated, was the decrees of the pope and various Church councils.

The basis for these last two—the fundamental reason that Catholics submitted to the papacy and to their Church hierarchy—was that they believed that that hierarchy could be traced in an unbroken line back to St. Peter (the famous apostolic succession), whom they believed Christ made the first pope. They based this belief on a very famous passage in the Bible, Christ’s injunction to St. Peter in Matthew 16, which the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church chose to interpret literally:

Thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my church. And the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it, and I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of Heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind upon Earth, it shall be bound also in Heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on Earth, it shall be loosed also in Heaven.

Protestant reformers rejected this wide area of competence for the Church hierarchy. As a young priest, Martin Luther had visited Rome and been appalled at the materialism and the corruption he’d witnessed among high-ranking churchmen. Remember, he did so at the very height of the Renaissance papacy.

He also found himself at odds with certain practices engaged in by the Church that had no basis in Scripture, for example the practice of selling indulgences. I’ll deal with that in a little more detail in a moment.

Noting the corruption of the Church and the fallibility of human beings generally, Luther concluded that the only sure guide to God's will was to be found in Scripture alone. From this radical but simple idea came three equally revolutionary planks of Protestantism. First, the Bible should be made available to the people. It should be translated into the vernacular, it should be printed (the invention of the printing press in the 15<sup>th</sup> century is crucial here), and it should be placed into the hands of the faithful. It was a boon to Protestantism that literacy was rising in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. By 1600, something like 25 percent of the male population was going to be able to read.

The second important plank that follows from Luther's idea of relying on Scripture is that Bibles in hand, there was really no need for a corps of professional sacrosanct clergy to interpret them. There was no need for popes, archbishops, and bishops to mediate between God and his people, hence Luther's idea of "a priesthood of all believers."

I should be careful here. Luther's ideal church would still have ministers, but they wouldn't have the semi-divine status and it wouldn't be this huge hierarchy between the people and their God.

The third important idea that flows from Luther's emphasis on the Bible is that any piece of religious dogma or practice without Scriptural foundation should be rejected or abolished out of hand. From this comes most of the Protestant critique of Catholicism. Strict Protestants rejected anything lacking a Scriptural basis, and this included the structure of popes and bishops. Here's another reason to get rid of them. Not only are they corrupt, but they're unscriptural, as are elaborate rituals and Church décor—including crucifixes, images of saints, and most of the sacraments.

By the way, since the Church hierarchy was obviously corrupt and unscriptural, and therefore would never reform the Church on its own volition, Luther found himself relying on secular rulers—men like Henry—to do the reforming. That would be a very useful idea to men like Henry.

These different attitudes to ministry were paralleled by different attitudes towards salvation. Catholics believed that salvation was won through two

mutually supportive means: faith (that is, belief in God, the resurrection of Jesus Christ and his Church), but also the performance of good works, especially the seven sacraments. These forgave sins and they produced grace. Grace earned by human beings in this life was thought to be necessary for salvation in the next.

In addition to the sacraments, the performance of other good works also increased the soul's store of grace: serving the poor, contributing to the Church, and living a good life generally. More specifically, the performance of good works was thought to reduce one sentence in purgatory, that interim place that souls went after death if they were not damned but not yet worthy of heaven. Needless to say, Catholics wanted to spend as little time in purgatory as possible.

Here too the Church's claim to bind in heaven was crucial. Specifically, the Roman Catholic Church believed that it could grant reductions of a specified number of years in purgatory—these were called “indulgences”—in return for good deeds. This makes sense. A good deed might be a pilgrimage to a holy place or the performance of a set of devotions—or, if you don't have time to do that, maybe a financial contribution to the Church. It's only a short step from here to simply selling indulgences. Since the papacy is trying to build St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, they need as much money as possible.

To Luther, this amounted to trying to buy one's way into heaven. Indeed, Martin Luther, tortured by his own sense of sin and convinced of the basic depravity of the human species, believed that human beings were so far below God's perfection, they couldn't hope to earn or “win” forgiveness for their sins. Protestants believed that no human being could merit salvation through his or her own efforts. Humans were too depraved and God could not be compelled, in any case.

Thus, salvation was entirely up to God. Faith alone justified the individual in God's eyes. Sacraments might or might not be useful in inclining an individual towards him, but they didn't automatically result in forgiveness or salvation. That would be telling God what to do.

Indeed, other rituals—the whole apparatus of priests, sacraments, processions, blessings, holy water, the sign of the cross, veneration of images—were at best useless and at worst mere superstition and idolatry.

One continental Protestant reformer, John Calvin, went further, arguing that since God knows all things, he already knows—indeed, has determined—the future. Therefore, he knows who is saved or damned. Thus some Protestants embraced predestination. This would lead to much soul searching on their part to determine whether they were of the saved—of the “elect”—or of the damned—the “reprobate.”

Other Protestants in company with Roman Catholics continued to believe in a contingent salvation. Okay? What does this have to do with us? More specifically, where did Henry stand in all this? Contemporaries were tempted to believe that since Henry had thrown the pope out of England, he must have been an enthusiastic Protestant. Certainly, Catholics thought so—at least continental Catholics.

But in fact, as we’ve indicated, Henry was nothing of the sort. He loved the Catholic emphasis on hierarchy, ritual, and obedience. He just wanted to be at the top of that hierarchy, the center of that ritual, and the object of that obedience. He soon found that ironically the only ones who could enthusiastically embrace his version of Catholicism were Protestants, who surrounded Thomas Cromwell and Anne Boleyn. Their ascendancy around 1536 ensured a Protestant religious policy and a pro-French foreign policy.

However, this ascendancy did not last long. There were several reasons for this. First, France proved to be no more useful an ally than the Holy Roman Emperor had been. Secondly, and more importantly, Henry’s relationship to Anne Boleyn started to go sour. One reason was that he began to tire of her enthusiastic pushing of Protestantism.

One example of what he might have been tired of took place on Passion Sunday—2 April 1536. The Queen’s almoner, John Skip, gave a sermon in which he compared Anne to Queen Esther defending the righteous Jews against pagans. Of course, the righteous Jews were the Protestant reformers. In this sermon, it was very clear that Hammon, the evil councilor, was

Cromwell. Henry himself was compared to any number of Old Testament kings including Solomon. Henry liked to be compared; he thought of himself as the English Solomon. What this particular preacher emphasized, however, was that Solomon had squandered his wisdom when it was overruled by his lust. It was perhaps not the message that Henry needed to hear, true as it might be.

Indeed, Henry's lust was beginning to overrule his wisdom, because about this time, Henry was beginning to fall for one of the Queen's ladies in waiting, one Jane Seymour, who was also a Protestant.

Finally, Anne failed Henry where it mattered most. In January 1536, she miscarried of a little boy. Remember that in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, there was no such thing as an obstetrical accident. All mishaps of pregnancy were viewed as the woman's fault and as divine punishment for sin. Henry's old fears of a curse on his marriage began to resurface.

Anne's fate was sealed when Catherine of Aragon died in the same month. Though Anne wore yellow in celebration of her rival's demise, this actually cleared the way for her removal. That spring, with Cromwell's approval, a secret committee was formed to find evidence of adultery against Queen Anne. She was accused, almost certainly unjustly, of adultery with a variety of young men at court, including her own brother, George, Lord Rochford.

Unfortunately, Anne gave her accusers the rope with which to hang her. She had mocked the king's love poetry. She had joked with her brother about Henry's bedchamber prowess or lack thereof. She teased Henry Norris, a bedchamber official, about his desire for her. In other words, what we have here is Anne's bright wit, which could be interpreted as flirtation, and flirtation was interpreted as evidence of action.

Queenly adultery was, of course, much more than a marital problem. It risked confusing the succession and leading to another Wars of the Roses. What did Henry really think? What is his role here? Did he, with his infinite capacity to deflect blame onto others, believe the accusations: "She's an adulteress, that's why I don't have a son?" Or did he in his infinite cynicism simply long to get rid of Anne at any cost?

In any case, once the king accepted the verdict, Tudor justice was swift. Anne was tried and convicted on 15 May 1536. Her marriage was declared null and void on the 17<sup>th</sup>, and she was beheaded, along with her five “lovers,” on the 19<sup>th</sup>.

As for Henry, he had a new queen before the month was out. Henry wed Jane Seymour on 30 May 1536. On 12 October 1537, Queen Jane gave birth to a son, Prince Edward. Twelve days later, she died of sepsis, a reminder that even royal personages could not escape the environmental and medical realities of the time.

Henry later claimed that he loved Jane best. Indeed, he is buried next to her at Windsor and why not? She gave him his male heir and then she gave him no further trouble.

Thus, in the fall of 1537, Henry VIII was an eligible bachelor again for the first time in almost 30 years. This presented the king and his principal minister with possibilities. The events of the past year had left Cromwell more in control of the court than ever. One theory about Anne Boleyn’s fall is that it was all engineered by Cromwell in order to bring him back to the center of affairs at court. He saw Anne as a dangerous rival.

The Boleyn faction was destroyed. The Aragonese faction was not much better off. They’d been largely discredited by the Pilgrimage of Grace. The king’s single state presented Cromwell with the opportunity to play matchmaker to the king, promote Protestantism, and secure defense of the realm and his own position at the same time. After all, Henry needed a new wife, a new alliance, and a religious settlement to go with them.

This was especially prescient because the Catholic powers finally began to realize that Henry was serious. For example, in the late 1530s, Charles V rejected Henry’s attempt at rapprochement, despite Henry’s issuance of a moderately conservative statement on faith called the “Ten Articles.” He’s trying to convince the Holy Roman Emperor that he really is a good Catholic.

In 1539, the pope finally gave up hope and excommunicated Henry. This is alarming because it in effect absolves Henry’s Catholic subjects of having

to obey him. It charges them with having to get rid of the “heretic” on the throne of England. That is alarming to Henry.

Even worse, in the same year of 1539, Francis I and Charles V sign a treaty of alliance. They’ve been fighting each other for the last 30 years. Whom are they going to ally against? Could it be the heretic on the throne of England?

Cromwell’s response is to pursue a third way in foreign policy. He would ally with a number of German Protestant princes who’d long opposed Charles V. His strategy had two prongs. First, Cromwell promoted Protestantism at home to prove to the Germans abroad that Henry was one of them. He engineered the dissolution of the monasteries, and he also issued injunctions in 1536 and 1538. These require that each parish church have an English Bible, that it keep a register of baptisms, burials, and marriages (for which social historians have been grateful ever since), that images and statues be removed, shrines despoiled, pilgrimages denounced, and holy days reduced in number. Pastors were to preach and to teach their flocks the Ten Commandments and the “Our Father,” not the paternoster.

This was the first real break with the practices of the old Church. Interestingly, Henry neither sanctioned them nor criticized them. He just let them happen. He was taking a wait-and-see attitude on reform.

The other prong of Cromwell’s strategy was to engineer a German marriage, specifically a marriage of Henry with the daughter of the Duke of Cleves, Anne of Cleves. There followed one of the strangest incidents in the diplomatic history of England. They couldn’t bring Anne to England unless they meant business, so Henry and Cromwell sent Hans Holbein, the great Tudor portraitist, to the Court of Cleves to paint Anne. When the painting came back, Henry professed himself enchanted: “Bring her over.”

She comes over, and when she arrives in England in 1540, Henry is shocked. He finds her “dull of face and dull of wit.” Within days, he’s calling her the “Flanders mare.” He turns on Cromwell and says, “I’ll go through with this for appearance sake—I’ll put my neck in the yoke,” but he’s not happy. The marriage was never consummated, which of course would give Henry an out in the end.

What happened here? It's possible that Holbein, being a court painter, flattered Anne. There's another apocryphal tradition that Anne did her level best to look as unattractive as possible upon her arrival in England, because after all, who really did want to marry this gouty, syphilitic wife-murderer?

In any case, the failure left Cromwell badly exposed. Still, to outside observers, he's doing pretty well. In April 1540, the king named him Lord Chamberlain of the household and Earl of Essex. The remnants of that old Aragonese Catholic faction, comprised of the Howard family and led by the Duke of Norfolk, were working against Cromwell and his fellow Protestant, Archbishop Cranmer.

Henry had a lot of reasons to listen to the Catholics. There was the failure of Cromwell's German strategy. There was Henry's growing fear that the Catholic powers would invade. There was his growing fear of increasingly radical Protestant preachers, who were being egged on by Cromwell. Remember, he is a Protestant.

Finally, the Catholic faction had a secret weapon: the vivacious and sensual 19-year-old Catherine Howard, with whom Henry was falling head over heels in love. While Cromwell ran the government at Whitehall, the Howards and the Catholic faction, and above all Catherine, were with Henry at Greenwich, Richmond, and Windsor, poisoning his mind against Cromwell and of course trying to get him to love Catherine.

The result was the triumph of the Catholic faction. First, against Cromwell's advice, Henry used the proceeds from the sale of monastic lands to strengthen the national defenses. He poured the money from the monasteries into building up the Royal Navy. He established a series of dockyards and coastal ports. Henry is often thought of as the father of the Royal Navy.

He also backed away from Protestant reform in order to keep Charles V and Francis I at bay. He issued proclamations against Anabaptists, clerical marriage, and a tax on church ceremonies. This culminated in the Act of Six Articles in which, over Cromwell's objections, Henry reaffirmed all seven sacraments and masses for the dead.



In the summer of 1540, to make sure that there were no rival claimants to the throne, he seized every Yorkist he could get his hands on with such a claim. Henry Pole, Henry Courtney, and Sir Edward Nevill all went to the block because of the blood flowing in their veins.

More surprisingly, so did Thomas Cromwell, Earl of Essex. Within a few weeks of his being elevated to Lord Chamberlain and that title, Cromwell was sent to the block, in part to show the Catholic powers that Henry had abandoned his Protestant foreign policy.

During the spring and summer, Henry also divorced Anne of Cleves and married Catherine Howard. The Catholic triumph was complete, but short-lived. In spring 1541, Henry's government discovered a series of Catholic plots in the North. In summer 1541, France and the Holy Roman Empire went back to war. They went back to their natural state. This took the pressure off Henry to appear more Catholic.

Without Cromwell to restrain him, Henry decided he'd like a part of this war. He invaded France's ally, Scotland, defeating the Scots at the battle of Solway Moss in the fall of 1542. The defeat was so crushing for the Scots that the king, James V, apparently died of dejection, which brought to the throne his infant daughter of just a few weeks, Mary, who becomes Queen of Scots. I apologize for the fact that this is now the third Mary under the Tudors, but there's nothing that I can do about that.

Henry came up with a plan: What if we married Mary, Queen of Scots, to Prince Edward. Nobody in Scotland had expressed interest in this, but that minor detail wasn't going to stop Henry. In fact, after initial agreement, a new Scottish government led by a Catholic cardinal, David Cardinal Beaton, repudiated the treaty that would have set up the marriage and reestablished the Auld Alliance with France.

Henry responded by dispatching another army, this time under Jane Seymour's brother, Edward Seymour, Earl of Hertford. The idea was to teach the Scots a lesson and to force them into allowing their princess to marry Prince Edward. This gives birth to the phrase "rough wooing."

Henry also invaded France in July 1544. By this time, Henry VIII was ill and prematurely aged. He had gout, was obese, and was suffering from dropsy and possibly syphilis. As a consequence, the English colossus had to be carried around France on a litter. From this position, he commanded an army of 48,000 men. That army captured the French port of Boulogne, but that was very small takings for a massive expenditure of money.

These martial adventures achieved little militarily, they embittered Scotland and the French, and they cost immense sums of money: £1 million for the Scottish campaign, £1.3 million for the French campaign, and £1 million for the navy and the coastal ports. Despite Parliament's cooperation for over £1 million in new taxes, the king was forced to sell more monastic lands, to extort forced loans from his subjects, and to take out foreign loans at the then astronomical rate of 14 percent interest. The standard rate on the international money market was in middle single digits during this time. Henry VIII is a bad risk. They all know that his treasury is bare, so the international bankers take advantage of him.

This wiped out what was left of the monastic nest egg. It led to re-coinage, which led to runaway inflation, which produced immense royal debt and helped to wreck the national economy, all so that Henry could relive his teenage glory days as a great military leader. In the meantime, in autumn 1541, the Privy Council uncovered evidence that Queen Catherine had, prior to her meeting Henry VIII, passed herself off as the wife of a servant of the Duchess of York and nearly married her cousin, Thomas Culpepper. Remember that in canon law, a promise to marry was as good as a marriage. Therefore, she was never free to contract marriage with the king. Worse, since her marriage, she'd remained overly familiar with Dereham, and she had arranged to meet Culpepper secretly.

Henry was genuinely smitten with Catherine. He didn't want to believe the accusations. In testimony, it came out that Henry was simply unable to satisfy the young woman. Finally, he was forced to agree to the charges, and he ordered Catherine's execution in February 1542.

As the king entered his final years, it is sometimes difficult to tell precisely what was going on in his mind. Perhaps in his supreme self-centeredness

he felt betrayed by all those who surrounded him. He was suspicious of Catholics for their loyalty to the pope. He was suspicious of Protestants for their doctrinal heterodoxy and rejection of hierarchy. It's typical of this hot-tempered man that in one day of July 1540, two days after executing Cromwell, he hanged three Catholic priests as traitors and he burnt three Protestant preachers as heretics. It's equally characteristic that in his last speech to Parliament, in December 1545, he of all people called for charity and tolerance.

Gradually the events of the previous two years had forced him to realize that the only people he could trust—the only people he could trust with his son and to maintain the world supremacy, and the only people who had everything to lose if the Tudor regime fell—were Protestants. In July 1543, he marries Catherine Parr, Lady Latimer, a middle-aged Protestant widow who proved a good mother to the royal children and to the aging king himself. As Henry approached his death on 25 January 1547, he established a Regency Council for his son that was filled with nothing but Protestants.

Henry VIII died in 1547 (his hand in Cranmer's), in his eyes, a good Catholic and a good king. In order to provide his people with a male heir, he has started processes that would unleash the Protestant Reformation; wreck the economy; embitter the French, Scots, and Irish; and eventually weaken the Crown he had sought to strengthen. In many respects, the story told in the rest of this course is the working out of the problems created by Henry VIII.

Perhaps his one great achievement was to give his people a male heir. In the next lecture, we'll meet King Edward.

## Edward VI: 1547–53

### Lecture 14

**In 1547, Henry and his country got what they had wanted: his son on the English throne. But that son was only nine years old at his accession. How could young Edward possibly solve the problems left to him by his father and the steps necessary for him to exist?**

England's situation at the accession of Edward VI (1547–1553) was not good. Henry VIII left his successor numerous problems, including massive government debt; widespread economic distress; religious uncertainty; and hostilities with Scotland, France, and Ireland. Henry's one real achievement was to give the country a male heir. But even this occurred at the cost of religious unity and a confused order of succession. Characteristically, Henry tried to end the confusion by actually willing the kingdom to his son; then, if Edward should die without heirs, to Mary; and, if Mary also died childless, to Elizabeth. It is a measure of Henry's posthumous prestige that this is exactly how the succession went.

Edward's personality can be compared usefully with that of his father. Unlike his father, he was a delicate boy, lacking strength and vigor. Like his father, he had a quick mind and a strong will. But Edward was too young to rule actively. That was reserved for his uncle.

Edward Seymour, Earl of Hertford, was a brother of Edward's mother, Queen Jane. He was ambitious. Within days of the new king's accession, he persuaded Edward to dismiss the rest of his Regency Council and name him Duke of Somerset and Lord Protector of the realm. He was idealistic and interested in social and economic justice. Unfortunately, his concern for the poor would offend the ruling elite. Worse, he was imperious, bull-headed, and a poor politician. Worse still, he had no killer instinct.

Somerset tried to solve the problems left over from Henry VIII. He continued Henry's "rough wooing" of Scotland, offering either marriage between Edward VI and Mary Queen of Scots or military reprisal if the Scots refused. He defeated the Scots in September 1547 at the Battle of Pinkie Cleugh. But

he did not have enough troops to follow up the battle with occupation. The Scots refused the marriage with Edward. In 1548, Mary escaped to France, where she married the *dauphin* (crown prince), Francis. Thus, Somerset's Scottish campaign further weakened the English treasury and drove the Scots back into the arms of the French and their "Auld Alliance."

One reason for Somerset's failure in Scotland was that Mary was Catholic and the Edward-Somerset regime espoused Protestant reform. In 1547, Somerset asked Parliament to repeal the Henrician Treason laws, the Act for Burning Heretics, the Six Articles, and all restrictions on reading and printing the Bible. These actions opened religious debate. Bibles and other Protestant tracts flooded into England. Also in 1547, Parliament passed the Chantries Act, dissolving churches endowed to pray for souls in purgatory, as well as almshouses, schools, and hospitals. This brought £600,000, badly needed, into the treasury; destroyed much of what was left of institutional Catholicism in England; and exacerbated the current social and economic crisis.

In 1548, Somerset commissioned a new English Book of Common Prayer from Archbishop Cranmer. This interim prayer book was a compromise. It retained much Catholic doctrine, including altars, vestments, private confession, and prayers for the dead. But it rejected transubstantiation and, for the first time, Englishmen and women could worship God in their own language. That June, a revolt developed in the remote West Country. The rebels demanded a return to the religious arrangements of the Six Articles, suppression of the English Prayer Book, and restoration of the Latin mass and the monasteries. Before Somerset could solve this problem, he faced a second rebellion over the state of the economy. The population was rising, from 2.4 million in 1525 to 4.5 million by 1600. Unfortunately, the English economy was not flexible enough to absorb the new laborers. Rents and food prices rose; wages plummeted. The Crown debts and re-coinage only added to inflation. Although wool remained lucrative, many landowners threw their tenants off the land or seized common land to graze sheep. But after about 1550, the religious wars in Europe began to stifle even this trade. The government pursued ineffective remedies: laws against enclosure, which were impossible to enforce; enforcement of trade monopolies, which benefited only the wealthy; new Poor Laws, which did little to actually help

the poor, while the dissolution of the monasteries, almshouses, and so on did much to hurt them.

In July 1549, an army of East Anglian tenant farmers led by Robert Kett rebelled, demanding reduced rents and entry fines, restrictions on landlords' use of common land, more local participation in government, and the reform of absentee or neglectful priests. The characteristic Tudor response to each of these rebellions would have been to promise the rebels anything to buy time to raise an army, then crush them. But Somerset had little money to raise an army. He had no desire to persecute the West Country religious rebels. He actually sympathized with some of the demands of Kett's rebels. Therefore, he hesitated.

In the summer of 1549, John Dudley, Earl of Warwick, began to plot with his fellow councilors and, later, the king, to replace Somerset. In August 1549, Edward gave Warwick command of an army with which he crushed Kett's rebellion. Kett was executed, along with many of his followers. At the same time, John, Lord Russell, suppressed the West Country rebels. On Warwick's return, he seized power and sent Somerset to the Tower. He was created Duke of Northumberland in 1551.

Like Somerset, the new Duke of Northumberland was ambitious, courageous, and intelligent. He was a better administrator, trying to get the king out of debt by launching reforms of government and seeking peace with France and Scotland. But he was much less scrupulous, lacking Somerset's social conscience. His primary goal seems to have been power for its own sake. Having achieved it, the next task was retaining it. This posed a problem. On the one hand, the young king wanted more Protestant reform. But Edward's health was poor and his long-term prospects were uncertain. If he died, he would be succeeded by the arch-Catholic Mary.

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**Like Somerset, the new Duke of Northumberland was ambitious, courageous, and intelligent. ... But he was much less scrupulous, lacking Somerset's social conscience.**

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At first, Northumberland bet on the king to live; he embraced the cause of Protestant reform. He suppressed all prayer books but Cranmer's, removed the last Catholic bishops, and sanctioned another wave of image-breaking. In 1552, he commissioned a revision of the Book of Common Prayer to eliminate more Catholic ritual. This was mandated by an Act of Uniformity imposing a financial penalty of four shillings for non-attendance at church. In 1553, Northumberland commissioned Forty-Two Articles of Faith, a doctrinal statement that retained only two sacraments: baptism and the Eucharist. England was now officially (if not yet popularly) a Protestant nation.

In the winter of 1552–1553, King Edward began to manifest increasing signs of tuberculosis. That spring, Northumberland persuaded Edward to will the Crown to Lady Jane Grey, a great granddaughter of Henry VII. He then persuaded Jane to marry his son Guildford. When Edward died on 6 July 1553, Northumberland and the Privy Council proclaimed Jane queen. In the meantime, Mary had escaped to Norfolk, which was dominated by the Catholic Howard family. There, she was proclaimed as well. Both sides raised armies



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**The young King Edward VI became increasingly ill with tuberculosis, setting off a battle for the crown.**

and marched out to capture the opposing queen. Mary's reached London before Jane's reached Norfolk. There, the Earl of Arundel convinced the Privy Council to proclaim Mary on the 19<sup>th</sup> of July. Jane's army disintegrated, leading Northumberland to try to abandon her for Mary. The latter was not fooled. Thus, the long-suffering Mary became queen. Jane, Guildford, and Northumberland were arrested and the latter executed immediately. ■

## Suggested Reading

Bucholz and Key, *Early Modern England*, chap. 3, secs. 4–5.

Guy, *Tudor England*, chap. 8.

Haigh, *English Reformations*, pt. II.

## Questions to Consider

1. Why, given Somerset's obvious intelligence, ambition, and good intentions, did he fail so miserably?
2. Why did the country choose the Catholic Mary over the Protestant Lady Jane Grey in 1553?



## Edward VI—1547–53

### Lecture 14—Transcript

In the last lecture, we witnessed how the personal predilections and decisions of a strong king could affect English religion, the economy, and foreign policy. In fact, I've argued that nearly every major issue with which we will deal in the rest of this course began with Henry VIII. To a great extent, his predilections and decisions revolved around a single goal: to be succeeded by a male. Of course, that was part of a larger Tudor goal of just staying on the throne.

In 1547, Henry and his country got what they had wanted: his son on the English throne. But that son was only nine years old at his accession. How could young Edward possibly solve the problems left to him by his father and the steps necessary for him to exist? In fact, he would be too young to do so. That would mean that he would have to turn his government over first to his uncle, Edward Seymour, Duke of Somerset, then to his uncle's nemesis, John Dudley, Duke of Northumberland.

As we will see, both men will try to please the king and solve England's foreign and domestic problems. The first of these men would be overcome by them. The second would be overcome by the king's successor.

Henry VIII left his successor numerous problems: massive government debt, economic distress, religious uncertainty, and hostilities with England's three most proximate neighbors—Scotland, France, and Ireland. He could claim perhaps two real achievements—last lecture I said one, but I'm going to give him another one. First, thanks to Henry's ruling style, the Tudors were surely more secure on their throne—more feared than they had ever been. Second, thanks to his break with Rome and relentless marital opportunism, their line had been advanced by a male heir—the male heir that Henry had so long desired.

Even this happened at the cost of religious unity and a confused order of succession. It's characteristic of Henry that he tried to solve even that problem by actually willing the kingdom to his son. Edward VI ascended the English throne because of the terms of Henry VIII's will. What the will

actually said was that Edward would succeed Henry and then if Edward should die without heirs, the succession would pass to Princess Mary, whom he had re-legitimized for the occasion. If Mary were to die childless, it would pass to Elizabeth, whom he had also had to re-legitimize, because of course, at the accusation of Anne's adultery, Elizabeth had become a bastard.

It's a measure of Henry's prestige even in death that his wishes were carried out exactly. That is exactly how the English succession went. Despite previous acts of Parliament de-legitimizing the two women, and despite the fact that Edward was just nine years old—remember, there were people still living who remembered the example of the last boy-king of England, Edward V—Henry's will (and I'm not just referring here to the piece of paper, but the one that was made of iron) was more powerful than that memory.

What of the new boy? How can he be compared with his father? I think such a comparison is very useful. Unlike his father, he was delicate. He lacked strength and vigor, although he did attempt to enjoy many of the same pastimes, like tilting, as his father. Like Henry VIII, he did have a quick mind and a strong will. His quick mind was apparent in his studies, which included Greek, Latin, and French. He also played the lute, took an interest in astronomy, and took an even bigger interest in theology. His strong will was apparent in his enthusiastic promotion of Protestant reform.

Like the previous Edward, this Edward's age precluded him from actually being the driving force behind most of the policies of his reign. Henry had foreseen the problem and established a Regency Council, just like Edward IV had. Just as with Edward IV's (for Edward V) Regency Council, within days of the new king's succession, one of the boy's uncles would step forward to run the country. Edward Seymour, Earl of Hertford, was a brother of Edward's mother, "Queen" Jane. He was obviously ambitious. Within days of the new king's accession, he trumped a number of other Protestant peers and persuaded Edward to dismiss the rest of his Regency Council, elevate him to the title "Duke of Somerset," and designate him Lord Protector of the Realm with the power to issue proclamations in the king's name and to name members of the Privy Council.

The reign of Edward V has just repeated itself in another way: Power has been seized by one of the boy-king's uncles. From now on, Somerset would be the effective ruler of England. Fortunately, Somerset was no Richard III. Rather, Somerset was idealistic. He was, in fact, (like Cromwell) a patron of commonwealth men and reforming administrators. He was something of a reformer himself. In particular, he seems to have been interested in some degree of social and economic justice, which makes him very interesting for somebody who ruled England in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

Unfortunately, his concern for the plight of the poor, like Wolsey's, would of course only make him unpopular with the people who matter. Worse, he was personally imperious, bull-headed, and a poor politician. According to his friend, William Padgett, "Your grace is grown in great choleric fashion whensoever you are contraried in that you have conceived in your head." It's not perhaps the most perfectly mellifluous sentence in the world, but it conveys the meaning.

According to a foreign observer, Somerset was looked upon by everybody as a "dry, sour, opinionated man." (He would have made a good professor, I think.) He issued 76 proclamations in two and one-half years. This is a guy who is indeed opinionated. Worse still, it's bad to be opinionated, bull-headed, and offend people, and yet at the same time not have the killer instinct with which to finish them off.

Unlike Richard III, Somerset wanted to dominate the boy-king. He didn't want to usurp him. He kept him secluded in the Privy Chamber. This is obviously a less ruthless, more prudent and commendable policy than Richard III. We're going to like Somerset more than most of us liked Richard III. But it would leave him exposed to anyone who might take advantage of his inclination to mercy and to anyone who might be a rival for the king's ear, and therefore to the possibility that he might be replaced.

Somerset's ascendancy in Edward's government was dominated by his attempt to solve the problems left over from Henry VIII. Somerset continued Henry's "rough wooing" of Scotland to begin with. This is the first problem he tried to solve. That is, he offered marriage between Edward VI and Mary,

Queen of Scots—and military reprisal if the Scots refused. Somerset had in fact made his name first on those military expeditions for Henry in 1544.

In September 1547, he defeated the Scots at the Battle of Pinkie Cleugh, just outside of Edinburgh. He did not have enough troops to follow up the battle with full occupation. Therefore, the victory and the subsequent establishment of English garrisons on the border only further alienated the Scots. In the words of one English commander, “There’s no hope of any practice for friendship to be ministered, but rather an extreme plague with fire and sword, which shall reduce them to poverty and submission.”

I don’t know about you, but this isn’t how I would want my princess to be courted.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the Scots refused the tender ministrations of the English army. In 1548, the French sent troops to help out, and Mary escaped to France. She would be raised in France and 10 years later, she would marry the *dauphin*, Francis. More about that and Mary, Queen of Scots, anon.

Somerset’s Scottish policy was a failure, at great cost to the English treasury. It cost nearly £600,000 pounds over two years. It revived the Scottish-French alliance—the “Auld Alliance.” It drove England’s oldest enemy back into the arms of England’s most powerful enemy.

One reason for Somerset’s failure in Scotland was that Mary was a Catholic, and the Edward Somerset regime was clearly Protestant. In 1547, Somerset asked Parliament to repeal the Henrician Treason laws, the Act for Burning Heretics, the Six Articles, and all restrictions on printing and reading the Bible. This removed nearly all the restrictions on religious debate. Never before had English men and women been so free to read and interpret their Bible. Bibles and other Protestant tracts flooded into England.

Catholicism was unused to having to compete with that kind of free interchange of ideas. The Catholic polemics took awhile to get started. The government would probably have suppressed what tracts that had been produced in any case. This may explain one reason why there don’t seem to be so many. This is not quite a free press, but it’s the freest press we’ve seen

in England so far and probably the freest press England will see until the end of the course.

Also in 1547, Parliament passed the Chantries Act, dissolving churches endowed to pray for souls in purgatory, as well as dissolving almshouses, schools, hospitals, religious guilds, fraternities, and clubs. This had an immense effect on the country. First, it brought £600,000, badly needed, into the treasury. Dissolving the chantries paid for the Scottish campaign.

It also precipitated another rash of image breaking, and it destroyed a lot of the physical plant of Roman Catholicism in England—a lot of what was left. In fact, the Church is now down to churches. No longer would ordinary English people turn to the Church for freely given charity, although we'll see that the Poor Law was going to be administered through the Church of England.

They could no longer turn to the Church for health care or even for parties, festivals, wedding receptions, and wakes. The reformers thought that these were inappropriate activities to take place in a churchyard. These measures did bring money to the treasury, but they also exacerbated the social and economic crisis England was experiencing because they cut off an important source of charity and health care.

On a more positive note, in 1548, Somerset commissioned a new English Book of Common Prayer from Archbishop Cranmer. This interim prayer book was a compromise. It retained a lot of Catholic doctrine including altars, vestments, private confession, and prayers for the dead, but it rejected transubstantiation. The Elevation of the Host was explicitly banned, as well as the idea that the mass was a sacrifice. Perhaps I should explain that transubstantiation is the Catholic belief that the priest, by his words at the altar, transforms the wine and the bread on the altar into the body and blood of Christ. That was now gone.

The new Book of Common Prayer increased lay participation and above all, for the first time, it meant that English men and women could worship God in their own language. Before going further, I'd like to take a minute on the Book of Common Prayer. It could be argued that next to the Bible—

specifically the King James Bible—this book has had the greatest influence on our language: its cadences, phrases, and eloquence. Many ceremonies that we think of as being stereotypical ceremonies from movies—for example, the typical wedding ceremony that appears in films—are the ones derived from the Book of Common Prayer.

Listen for a moment to the beauty of its language in the Magnificat, Mary's ecstatic prayer of thanksgiving and praise, upon learning that she is to be the mother of Christ, from Luke, Chapter I:

My soul doth magnify the Lord,  
And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior.  
For he hath regarded  
The lowliness of his handmaiden.  
For behold, from henceforth  
All generations shall call me blessed.  
For he that is mighty hath magnified me;  
And holy is his Name.  
And his mercy is on them that fear him  
Throughout all generations.  
He hath showed strength with his arm;  
He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.  
He hath put down the mighty from their seat,  
And hath exalted the humble and the meek.  
He hath filled the hungry with good things;  
And the rich he hath sent empty away.  
He remembering his mercy  
Hath holpen his servant Israel;  
As he promised to our forefathers,  
Abraham and his seed forever.

Language like that would convince the English people that they were the new Israel and that the proud whom God had scattered were the pope and his minions. God's promise was theirs. Others, as we shall see, found this new language strange and unfit for the worship of God. Maybe because they anticipated resistance, in 1549, Parliament mandated the use of the new Book of Common Prayer in an Act of Uniformity, which required attendance of all

people in England. That same year, priests were allowed to marry. About 10 percent of the clergy did so.

Reaction to these changes was mostly tepid. One exception took place in the remote West Country. On Whit Monday, 10 June 1549, the Monday after Pentecost and the day after the introduction of the new Prayer Book, the villagers of Sampford Courtenay, Devonshire, forced their priest to say a Latin mass. The rebellion quickly spread throughout Devon and Cornwall. The rebels laid siege to Exeter and demanded a return to the more conservative religious arrangements under Henry VIII's Six Articles, suppression of the English Prayer Book, which they compared to a Christmas game, and restoration of the Latin mass and the monasteries. Many also seemed to resent the loss of hospitals, Saints' days, and beloved rituals.

Somerset was no religious persecutor. He was short of money, so he didn't have an army. He offered a general pardon if the rebels would just go home. Instead, they were soon joined in rebellion by those dissatisfied with the economy. England was going through an economic crisis in the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, to which I alluded slightly in the last lecture. First, the population was rising, from 2.4 million people in 1525, to about 4.5 million people by 1600. Normally, demographic growth is good news for an economy. It usually brings increased demand and increased employment to fulfill that demand.

The English economy wasn't flexible or sophisticated enough to absorb the new labors. Rents and food prices rose 10 percent between 1540 and 1550. We would consider that very low inflation, but remember that because this labor force was increasing, wages stagnated. People were used to prices that hadn't changed in 100 years. The real purchasing power of, for example, urban construction workers fell 40 percent between 1500 and 1560. The Crown debts and re-coinage only added to inflation. While wool remained lucrative because of foreign demand, many landowners threw their tenants off the land or seized common land to graze sheep. This, plus a series of bad harvests, further increased the price of food.

Moreover, after about 1550, even the wool trade collapsed because of religious wars in Europe and overproduction. This all resulted in increased

numbers of unemployed and a massive movement of migrants, or vagrants as they were thought of by the law, depending upon your point of view, in search of work.

No one understood the basic laws of economics. The government concluded that the problem was simply a combination of laziness on the part of the vagrants—“Why don’t they get a job?”—and greed on the part of the wealthy. As one government commission wrote:

Towns, villages, and parishes do daily decay in great numbers. Houses of husbandry and poor men’s habitation be utterly destroyed everywhere and in no small number, husbandry and tillage, which is the very paunch of the commonwealth, greatly abated. All this groweth through the great dropsy and insatiable desire of riches of some men that be so much given to their own private profit that they pass nothing on to the commonwealth.

One of the things I’d like you to note about that quote is notice it uses bodily metaphors—dropsy, paunch—to explain the economy. These people don’t have a language with which to talk about what’s happening in the economic world. They don’t have a study of economics. They look and see unemployed people and people being thrown off the land, and they conclude it’s simple greed. It’s simple human behavior.

What could the government do? It passed more laws against enclosure, which were, of course, ineffective as all laws against enclosure were. It sought to stimulate trade by enforcement of monopolies, which in the end only benefited the wealthy. It dissolved the chantries and that eased the government’s debt situation, but, remember, that that got rid of a lot of the institutions that distributed charity. It enacted new Poor Laws to help the poor, but it was going to be a long time before the government was really geared up to do that. By the way, these new Poor Laws included harsh punishments for vagrants.

In July 1549, the tenants of Robert Kett, a Norfolk gentlemen, rioted. There are several stories about this. One of them is that they were actually tearing down the fence of his neighbor, and he walked over and asked, “What are



you doing?” They explained to him their plight, their situation, and how enclosure was hurting them, and he decided to join them.

Remarkably, upon hearing their grievances, Kett decided to lead eventually 16,000 men, who formed a rebel army. They captured a regional capital of Norwich and sent the king a list of 29 demands. These included reduced rents and “entry fines” (an entry fine is a fine you paid when you became a tenant on a piece of land), and restrictions on the landlord’s use of common land. They wanted more local participation in government. They wanted reform of absentee or neglectful priests—notice that’s a Protestant demand.

Some went further, demanding an end to the private ownership of land—early Communism. These objectives were mainly economic. What religious content they had was Protestant. In other words, these people had nothing in common with the Western, or Prayer Book, Rising. It’s two different parts of the country and two different sets of demands. The Prayer Book rebels were challenging the religious situation. The East Anglia rebels were challenging the whole economic structure of England.

Ironically, this is a real problem for Somerset because he had patronized commonwealth writers who had actually advocated some of the positions that the rebels are now taking. He’s got a real dilemma.

By now, you know that the characteristic Tudor response to rebellions would have been promise these people anything, raise an army, and crush them ruthlessly. Somerset had little money to raise an army, and he had no desire to persecute the West Country religious rebels. He actually sympathized with some of the demands of Kett’s rebels. He hesitated between sympathy, which betrayed weakness, and ruthlessness, which would violate his principle and plunge the country into further debt and possibly civil war.

That hesitation was dangerous, not so much because the rebels might win, but because it allowed for the rise of a far more ruthless and unscrupulous man. In the summer of 1549, John Dudley, Earl of Warwick, began to plot with his fellow councilors and, later, the king, to replace Somerset.

Who was Warwick? He was a descendant of Edmund Dudley, who'd been executed by Henry VIII. He'd risen to prominence during the wars of Henry VIII, helping to create the Tudor name. He'd been an ally of Somerset's in the Council and he was currently a member of Privy Council. There, and privately to the king (note how important it is to watch your back at court), he began to accuse Somerset of indecision, cowardice, and abuse of authority. Even Somerset's friend Padgett complained that the reason for these rebellions was "Your own lenity, your softness, your opinion to be good to the poor."

Warwick also appealed to landowners in Council, who saw Somerset's social and economic program as a threat. He even made promises to Catholics that he was going to be on their side. In August 1549, Edward gave Warwick the command of an army, which he used to crush Kett's rebellion. In typical Tudor fashion, Kett was executed along with many of his followers. His remains were hanged outside Norwich Castle to remind any would-be sympathizers that Edward was the son of Henry VIII.

At the same time, John Lord Russell earned an earldom by suppressing the West Country rebels with similar brutality. On Warwick's return, with the blessing of Edward and the Council, he seized power on 10 October 1549. It was a bloodless coup. Basically, there was a vote in Privy Council, and it was clear that Warwick had more supporters than Somerset did.

Somerset was sent to the Tower. Surprisingly, he was released in spring 1551. Apparently, Somerset couldn't cope with being just another councilor. There's evidence of plots against Warwick, so in October 1551, Somerset was re-arrested on a charge of conspiring against the government. He was beheaded in January 1552.

In the meantime, Warwick was not granted Somerset's old title of Lord Protector. He had to settle for being created Duke of Northumberland in 1551. Who was this new duke, the effective ruler of England? According to one contemporary, Northumberland was a bit like Somerset: "A man truly of a stout and haughty courage and in war most valiant, but too much raging with ambition."

He was actually a better administrator than Somerset was. He was capable and hard working. He worked well with the Privy Council. He launched reforms of government. He tried to get the king out of debt. Among other things, he sued for peace with France and Scotland, which would immediately bring down the defense costs.

He was much less scrupulous than his predecessor. He lacked Somerset's social conscience. He abandoned a lot of Somerset's social legislation.

His primary goal seems to have been power for its own sake. Having achieved it, the next goal was keeping it, and therein lay a problem. On the one hand, he knew that King Edward, who was now in early adolescence, wanted further Protestant reformation. He knew that he wanted a minister who would be an enthusiastic Protestant. On the other hand, King Edward's prospects did not look so good. He was sickly, and there was a real question as to how long he would reign.

The problem for Northumberland was that everybody knew that Edward's successor was Mary, who was a Catholic. How far to push Protestantism? Do I want to ingratiate myself with the king that is or the queen that will be? For the moment, Northumberland bet on the king that was. Thus, he abandoned his Catholic allies on the Council, and he became the champion of Protestant reform.

He suppresses all prayer books but Cranmer's. He removed the last Catholic bishops and locked them in the Tower. He sanctioned another wave of image breaking. At this stage, it's surprising that there were any images left, but apparently there were still some to break. In 1552, he commissioned a revision of the Book of Common Prayer, which eliminated more Catholic ritual. From henceforward, the altar became a communion table, moved from the east end of the Church to the middle. It was presided over by a minister, not a priest. That is, the mass was clearly no longer an actual sacrifice, merely a commemoration.

This was mandated by a new Act of Uniformity, which imposed a penalty of four shillings for non-attendance. That would be a good chunk—more

than half—of the weekly wage of an ordinary husbandman. This is a crushing penalty.

In 1553, Northumberland commissioned a doctrinal statement, the Forty-two Articles of Faith, which retained only two sacraments: baptism and the Eucharist. These measures worked to this extent: They did cement Northumberland in Edward's favor. Further, they enriched him and his followers with the spoils from dissolved chantries and shrines. Northumberland, as Somerset had done before, I should point out, was not above taking the loot from this Reformation.

Above all, England was now for the first time an officially Protestant state. That doesn't mean that everybody in England is a Protestant or even knows what that is. I think at this point, when you imagine what it must have been like to be sitting in the pews, you have to imagine confusion. Remember that the old Church has been under siege now for over 20 years. There's a real question as to whether anyone was left who really knew how to be a good Catholic. There's no evidence that very many people knew yet how to be good Protestants. If Edward lived, the Duke would teach them. In the end, of course, Edward did not live, and it could be said that Northumberland did more for Protestantism than it ever did for him. In the winter of 1552–1553, the king began to manifest signs of what we now think was tuberculosis. Northumberland knew that after his wholehearted embrace of Protestant reform, he had no hope for Mary's favor. That spring, he persuaded Edward to will the Crown, as his father had done, to Lady Jane Grey.

Jane Grey was a granddaughter of Mary, Duchess of Suffolk. You may remember this Mary was Henry VIII's younger sister. She's the one who had been pawned off on various kings of France. Eventually, she had been allowed to marry the love of her life, after her diplomatic usefulness was all used up, who happened to be the Duke of Somerset. This young woman was her granddaughter.

Jane had many qualities to recommend her to Northumberland and the country at large. She was of royal blood, a gifted scholar, and a devoted Protestant. Northumberland then persuaded Jane to marry his son, Guildford. You see, Northumberland didn't just want to be queen-maker, he wanted

to be the grandfather of kings. Finally, when Edward died on 6 July 1553, Northumberland persuaded the Privy Council to accept the will and proclaim “Queen” Jane.

In the meantime, Princess Mary had been alerted. She left London in the dead of night with a small group of courtiers and escaped to Norfolk, the ancestral home of the Howard family, the most important Catholic family in England. There, she was proclaimed too on 9 July. Now, we have Henry VIII’s worst nightmare: two sovereigns competing with each other, and both of them females. Both sides raised armies and in the most momentous game of chess in English history, marched out to capture the opposing queen.

Mary’s army reached London before Jane’s reached Norfolk. In London, Henry Fitzalan, Earl of Arundel, convinced the Privy Council to proclaim Mary on the 19<sup>th</sup> and the capital rose for Mary. In the meantime, Jane’s army was beginning to disintegrate, leaving the desperate Northumberland to try to abandon her by throwing his cap in the air at Cambridge for Mary. He did not make it after all. No one was fooled.

Thus, the long-suffering, long-rejected Mary became queen. Jane, Guildford, and Northumberland were arrested and the latter executed immediately. Once again, an over-mighty subject had been dealt with by Tudor ruthlessness. For once, the better claim to the throne had won out.

In this lecture, we’ve seen the strengths and limitations of Henry VIII’s iron will. He could establish his son on the throne, but he couldn’t give him a long life. During his reign, Edward’s chief policy initiative was the promotion of Protestantism. Its extirpation would be that of his successor.

We have seen what a small boy could do with the apparatus of the Tudor state. Now, a woman would try.

# Mary I: 1553–58

## Lecture 15

**Mary's reign is full of ironies, and one of them is that Mary's virtues would turn out to be vices.**

**T**he English people rallied to Mary because she was the daughter of Henry VIII, a Tudor, and the rightful heir. They did not do so because she was a woman, because she was half-Spanish, or because she was Catholic. It was the great tragedy of Mary's reign that she failed to realize this.

The new queen had many positive attributes. Like all Tudors, she was intelligent, courageous, dignified, and resilient, and she had a Renaissance education. Unlike her father, she was merciful, sparing, for now, both Lady Jane Grey and Guildford Dudley. But the new queen was otherwise ill-fitted for her role. She was naive in politics and inexperienced in government. Her education involved no training to be queen. Rather, her father had kept her away from the corridors of power. Lacking experience, she relied on her conscience and her faith, which led to an inflexibility lacking in the other members of her family. Above all, she was half-Spanish and all Catholic, which led her to ally with the Spanish Empire, sometimes against her interests, and attempt to undo the Reformation, at tremendous human cost. Both policies would bring misery to her people and infamy to her reign.

The first major issue facing Mary was that of her own marriage. Mary had been the least eligible bachelorette in England before her accession, thanks to her father's repudiation. Now, suddenly, at age 37, she was a catch. Any number of European princes now found her (and an English alliance) desirable. The contemporary attitude to gender that had almost cost her the throne now dictated that she marry quickly: This society was not comfortable with the idea of an independent, unattached woman. Mary felt a similar urgency, because she wanted an heir before time and her body gave out.

Mary's choice of a husband was controversial. The Privy Council wanted her to marry an Englishman. Mary preferred her Habsburg roots and opted

for her cousin, the son of Charles V, Philip, King of Naples. This choice was unpopular with many of her subjects. In January 1554, Sir Thomas Wyatt raised a rebellion of 3,000 men in Kent and marched on London. Their goal was to prevent the Spanish marriage and, possibly, displace Mary in favor of the Protestant Elizabeth. Mary rallied the royal guards and the London-trained bands to stop the rebels. Afterwards, Wyatt and about 90 of his followers were executed, along with Lady Jane Grey and Guildford Dudley. Princess Elizabeth also came under suspicion, but she had been careful to avoid overt involvement in Wyatt's plot.

The marriage to Philip took place in January 1554. It would not prove happy. Mary loved Philip. Desperately wanting an heir, within months, she experienced a false pregnancy. But Philip saw the match as a diplomatic alliance.

The return to Rome was the principal policy goal of Mary's reign. To undo what Henry VIII and Edward VI had done, Mary would, like them, have to turn to Parliament. This was a problem, because the aristocrats

whom Parliament represented did not want to give up their monastic lands. In the fall and winter of 1553–1554, Parliament revoked the Acts of Uniformity and banned the Book of Common Prayer. But they would go no further. In 1554, Reginald, Cardinal Pole, Mary's principal advisor in religious affairs, returned from Rome with a dispensation from the pope to allow purchasers to keep their monastic lands. In the short term, this made possible the further restoration of Roman Catholicism in England: Parliament consented to the return to Rome and reenacted the Heresy Laws. But in the long term, it meant that much institutional Catholicism, monasteries, almshouses, guilds,



**Mary I of England lacked political experience, and her policies brought great misery to her subjects.**

schools, and hospitals, would never be restored. This would make it all the more difficult to win Mary's subjects back to the faith.

In its absence, all Mary could do was mandate the return to Catholic forms of worship, restore deprived Catholic bishops, and deprive priests who married or refused to recant Protestantism. Recent evidence suggests that most churches and their parishioners restored the rood crosses and images and returned to the old ways without a murmur. But a significant minority did not. Some 800 Protestants fled to the Continent. These "Marian exiles" flocked to centers of Protestantism, such as Frankfurt or Geneva, to imbibe its theology at the wellspring. Others stayed to face persecution. Beginning in February 1555, Mary and Pole resorted to burning the most recalcitrant Protestants, including Archbishop Cranmer. Eventually, some 290 men, women, and adolescents, mostly of humble background, were incinerated.

**Mary and the Catholics might have written that history if she had been more successful, lived longer, or produced an heir.**

Why did Mary pursue a course that can only strike us as barbaric? Like most of her contemporaries, she rejected the idea of religious toleration, believing that hers was the One True Faith and that anyone who disagreed was a disloyal subject, a minion of the devil, and a double menace to society, dragging her other subjects not only into disobedience but, ultimately, to hell. By this argument, it was Mary's solemn duty to cut out the cancer before it spread. In the end, Mary's Counter-Reformation failed, not so much because of the burnings, but because her reign was too short to either extirpate Protestantism or reestablish Catholicism.

After the reign, Protestants began to write its history, in particular, John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments of the English People* (better known as *The Book of Martyrs*). This work portrayed the burning of each martyr in the most grisly, but also inspiring, detail. It became the bestselling work, in English, after the Bible. In the next few years, as the English faced Catholic invasions from abroad and plots at home, Foxe's stories of Mary's cruelty



would convince his readers that God had chosen them as an elect Protestant nation, facing the forces of the foreign Catholic anti-Christ. Still, Mary and the Catholics might have written that history if she had been more successful, lived longer, or produced an heir.

In January 1557, Mary's husband, now Philip II of Spain, declared war on France. He expected Mary's England, which he regarded as community property, to join him. The Privy Council and Parliament opposed this, because England was gripped by an economic crisis and an influenza epidemic and lacked an adequate army. But Mary overruled her councilors on the grounds of the desire for glory on the part of her nobles. The war went badly, partly because Parliament refused to pay for it. In January 1558, the French surprised and captured the last English possession in France, Calais. Calais no longer had any real strategic significance to the English, but as the last outpost of the Continental empire that England had ruled since William the Conqueror, its psychological importance was immense. Mary said that at her death, her subjects would find the word "Calais" engraved upon her heart.

During the spring and summer of 1558, the queen once again thought herself pregnant. In fact, she was probably suffering from a uterine tumor and dropsy. In November, her Privy Council persuaded her to recognize Elizabeth as her heir. Days before Mary's death on 17 November, Elizabeth began to hold court. Possessing many Tudor virtues, Mary lacked the most essential two of all: an instinct for what her people wanted and the flexibility to give it to them. Rather, she followed her Catholic conscience and Spanish heart to disaster. Worse, she confirmed everything that contemporaries feared about female rule. ■

### Suggested Reading

Bucholz and Key, *Early Modern England*, chap. 3, secs. 6–8.

Guy, *Tudor England*, chap. 8.

Haigh, *English Reformations*, pt. III.

## Questions to Consider

1. Was English resistance to Mary's Spanish match a matter of xenophobic prejudice or a realistic assessment of England's needs?
2. Why did the fates of the Protestant martyrs capture the imagination of the English people, as those of Catholic martyrs (More, Fisher, Jesuits under Elizabeth I) have not?

## **Mary I: 1553–58**

### **Lecture 15—Transcript**

In the last lecture, the government of Edward VI attempted to wean England from Henrician Catholicism and administer its first full dose of Protestantism. Just about the time that that process began to pick up speed, it was halted by Edward's untimely death.

Mary, the forgotten Tudor for much of her life, would now get her turn. A loyal daughter of the Church, she would seek to undo nearly every one of Edward's initiatives. This lecture will cover the entire reign, first assessing Mary's character, her controversial marriage to Philip II of Spain, and the resultant Wyatt's Rebellion. It then addresses Mary's attempt to restore papal supremacy and the Roman Catholic Church in England via means of Parliamentary legislation and the persecution, by burning at the stake, of Protestants who would not recant. That attempt would fail, mainly because her reign was too short and she failed to produce an heir.

The lecture concludes with Mary's failed war with France and the loss of Calais, and her grudging acknowledgment of Elizabeth I as her heir. As should be obvious, the theme of this lecture will be failure.

The English people had rallied to Mary because she was the daughter of Henry VIII, thus a Tudor and the rightful heir. They did not do so because she was a woman. They did not do so because she was half-Spanish or because she was Catholic. It was the great tragedy of Mary's reign that she failed to draw the obvious lesson from this. Her Tudor heritage was an advantage to be exploited to the full, while her gender and her Spanish background were, in the eyes of her subjects, neutral factors at best, to be minimized and obscured if she was going to keep them happy.

As for Catholicism, it divided her people. Either you loved it, you hated it, or you were indifferent.

Unfortunately, she would choose to subordinate her strong personality to the demands of her religion, her Spanish heritage, and contemporary

expectations of her gender. The result would be the only Tudor reign that could be called a failure—tragic, even pathetic.

Yet, the new queen had many positive attributes that should have made for a successful reign. Like all Tudors, Mary was intelligent, courageous, dignified, and resilient. Like all Tudors, she'd had the benefit of a Renaissance education and was able to speak or read Spanish, French, Greek, and Latin, including Erasmus's *Paraphrases* and More's *Utopia*, which originally appeared in Latin.

Nor was she entirely serious: She also danced and played the lute. Unlike her father, she had a sense of mercy. She spared, for now, Lady Jane Grey and Guildford Dudley, although she did lodge them safely in the Tower. Yet, one can sense in the following highly qualified description by the Venetian ambassador, that Mary's hard life—remember, she'd been rejected by her father, as had her mother—had left its mark:

She is of low, rather than middling, stature, but although short, she has not personal defects in her limbs, nor is any part of her body deformed.

That's good to know.

She is of spare and delicate frame, quite unlike her father who was tall and stout, nor does she resemble her mother, who if not tall, was nevertheless bulky.

Note that even in her physical appearance, both of her parents disown her. She doesn't look like either one of them.

“When younger, she was considered not merely tolerably handsome, but of beauty exceeding mediocrity. At present, with the exception of some wrinkles caused more by anxieties than by age, which makes her appear some years older, her aspect for the rest is very grave. Her eyes are so piercing that they inspire not only respect, but fear in those in whom she fixes them. In short, she is a

seemly woman, never to be loathed for ugliness, even at her present age, without considering her degree of queen.”

She was 37 years old.

Finally, he noted in Mary,

A very deep melancholy, so that the remedy of tears and weeping, to which from childhood she has been accustomed and still often used by her, is not sufficient.

Perhaps, in her heart of hearts, she knew something.

The new queen who had born such anxieties and shed such tears was in fact naïve in politics and inexperienced in government. Her fine education had concentrated on moral instruction, not on the training necessary to be queen. Her father had rejected her until late in his reign. Even then, he still kept her from the corridors of power. Mary was never groomed to succeed. Lacking experience, she relied on her conscience and her faith.

Mary’s reign is full of ironies, and one of them is that Mary’s virtues would turn out to be vices. I’m sure we can agree that in general a politician who relies on conscience and perhaps even faith is not something to be sniffed at, but in the end, she had too much of one and was too rigid in the other. This led to an inflexibility lacking in the other members of her family. Compare this with her father or her grandfather, who, when stopped down one path, would immediately choose another, never to be stopped.

Above all, Mary was half-Spanish and all Catholic, which led her to ally the country with the Spanish Empire, sometimes against its best interests, and attempt to undo the Reformation whatever the human cost. Both policies would bring misery to her people and infamy to her reign.

The first major issue facing Mary was that of her own marriage. Of course, for most of her sad lonely life, Mary had been the least eligible bachelorette in England. She’d been disowned by her father and shunted aside by her brother. Suddenly—miraculously in her view—at the age of 37, she was

a catch. In fact, contemporary attitudes to gender, which had almost cost her the throne, now dictated that she had to marry. This society was not comfortable with the idea of an independent, unattached woman. Mary felt a similar urgency, for she wanted an heir before time and her body gave out.

The Privy Council and other prominent subjects urged her to marry an Englishman, but her choices were limited. The only name they really came up with was Edward Courtenay, Earl of Devon, a descendant of Edward IV. This was apparently his only recommendation. According to the imperial ambassador, he was “proud, poor, obstinate, inexperienced, and vindictive.” Just what you’re looking for in a husband.

Mary, wanting to solidify England’s place in Catholic Europe and always more comfortable with the Spanish side of the family anyway (they hadn’t repudiated her), opted instead for her cousin, the son of Charles V, the heir to the Spanish throne, Philip, King of Naples, the future Philip II of Spain. This choice was opposed not only by her Privy Council, but also by many of her subjects. As one rebellious Norwich carpenter put it, “If the marriage to a Spaniard take place, we should lie in swine sties in caves, and the Spanish should have our houses and we should live like slaves.” The English were never known for their cosmopolitan openness.

In January 1554, Sir Thomas Wyatt raised a rebellion of 3,000 men in Kent, as well as that Norwich carpenter, and marched on London. Their goal was to prevent the Spanish marriage and possibly displace Mary in favor of the Protestant Elizabeth. Lacking an army of her own, Mary appealed eloquently to her subjects’ loyalty by going to the guildhall and making a speech. (The guildhall, by the way, is the city hall of London.)

I am your queen, to whom at my coronation, when I was wedded to the realm and laws of the same, the spousal ring I have on my finger, which never hither to was nor hereafter shall be left off, you promised your allegiance and obedience to me. And I say to you on the word of a prince, I cannot tell how naturally the mother loveth the child, for I was never the mother of any.

Even now, it's an obsession.

But certainly, if a prince and governor may as naturally and earnestly love her subjects as the mother doth love the child, then assure yourselves that I, being your lady and mistress, do as earnestly and tenderly love and favor you. I thus loving you, cannot but think that ye as heartily and faithfully love me. Then I doubt not but we shall give these rebels a short and speedy overthrow.

She spoke like a Tudor. That speech was worthy of Elizabeth, her sister. It's easy to forget sometimes that Mary was a Tudor too.

She then rallied the royal guards and the remnants of Northumberland's army (in fact, they proved useless in the end). The key was actually the staunch resistance of the city of London, whom she'd rallied in that guildhall speech. They refused entrance and therefore stopped the rebels. Do you remember that moment in the Wars of the Roses when London closed its gates on the victorious Lancastrian army? London is always an important variable in that calculus of power in England. If you lose London, you lose England. If you keep London, you've got a chance. Numerous English politicians have realized that and, of course, Adolph Hitler found that out to his cost in the 1940s.

Afterwards, Wyatt and about 90 of his followers were executed, along with Lady Jane Grey and Guildford Dudley. It was just too dangerous to let them live. Princess Elizabeth also came under suspicion and was lodged in the Tower, but she'd been careful to avoid overt involvement in Wyatt's plot. She would have been happy to see it succeed, but she maintained her distance from the rebels.

The marriage to Philip took place amid spectacular pomp at Winchester Cathedral in July 1554. It would not prove happy. Mary loved Philip and wanted an heir. Within months, she experienced a false pregnancy. Philip saw the alliance as purely diplomatic.

In the meantime, the Tudor queen, like her predecessors, had gotten her way. She would not be so lucky or successful in the area of religion. The return to

Rome was the principal policy goal of Mary's reign. To achieve it—to undo what Henry VIII and Edward VI had done—Mary would, like them, have to turn to Parliament.

Note what Henry started. Do you remember? Parliaments never used to discuss religion, but once he goes to Parliament for the Reformation, it is inevitable that Parliament will say we have to have a role here. This was a problem, that is, turning to Parliament to return England to Rome. The landowners whom Parliament represented had much to lose from a Catholic restoration, namely all those lovely monastic lands that they would have to give up.

The problem was solved in the fall and winter of 1553–1554. First, Parliament revoked the Acts of Uniformity, and then it banned the Book of Common Prayer. They would go no further because of the monastic lands, until, late in 1554, Reginald, Cardinal Pole, Mary's principal advisor in religious affairs, returned from Rome with a dispensation from the pope to allow purchasers to keep their monastic lands. In the short term, this made possible the further restoration of Roman Catholicism in England.

In January 1555, Parliament consented to reestablish the pope's power. It also reenacted the Heresy Laws—more anon. In the long term, this dealt a terrible blow to the prospects for restoration, because it meant that the monasteries, almshouses, guilds, schools, and hospitals would never be restored. Mary tried to found a few, but she had no money and no time.

This would make it all the more difficult to win Mary's subjects back to the faith. In its absence, all Mary could do was mandate the return to Catholic forms of worship, restore the deprived Catholic bishops—bringing them back out of the Tower (like Gardiner and Tunstall), and deprive priests who'd married or refused to recant Protestantism. She ejected about 2,000 priests. In the short term, this is good for Catholicism in that these people were either married or preaching against Catholicism, but in the long term, this exacerbated the problems of absenteeism and pluralism. Two thousand priests is about a quarter of the priesthood, and those people are not going to be replaced very quickly.



It must also have been terribly hard on the families of these men. Still, recent evidence suggests that most churches and their parishioners went back to the Latin mass, and restored their crosses and images, many of which had been buried. They brought them back and dusted them off. They did so, sometimes eagerly and often without a murmur, but there was a significant minority who did not. For some, the new emphasis on full-blown Catholicism was strange or threatening. Others were committed Protestants. They had only two choices. They could flee; some 800 fled to the continent. These “Marian exiles” flocked to centers of Protestantism, like Frankfurt or Geneva, to imbibe Protestant theology at its wellsprings. About 800 got out.

Others stayed to face persecution by burning at the stake. It was the burnings that put the “bloody” in “Bloody Mary.” The burnings began in February 1555 with John Rogers, whose crime was to translate the Bible into English. They continued in Oxford with the burnings of Hugh Latimer, Bishop of Worcester, and Nicholas Ridley, Bishop of London. That was followed by the burning of Thomas Cranmer, the Protestant Archbishop of Canterbury and author of the Book of Common Prayer.

It is said that as the flames were being lit, Latimer called out, “Be of good comfort, Master Ridley, and play the man. We shall this day light such a candle by God’s grace in England as I trust shall never be put out.”

Personally, I find Cranmer’s story perhaps the most moving. Cranmer is a man who all through his life had changed. His spirituality had evolved. He had doubts at various times in his life about the Protestant direction in which it had evolved. He was given numerous chances in prison to recant his Protestantism. Mary really wanted this, for he’d been the point man of the Edwardian Reformation and the author of the Book of Common Prayer.

In fact, Cranmer, faced with death, did recant six times, admitting, “The pope was right. I’m loyal to the pope. I was wrong.” It’s easy to see this as a sign of weakness. Personally, I see it as a sign of humanity.

When on 21 March 1556, he was brought to St. Mary’s Church in Oxford to recant publicly before his death, he did something unusual. He knelt, he wept, and he prayed. Then he stood and said the following:

And now I come to the great thing that troubleth my conscience more than any other thing that ever I said or did in my life. That is the setting abroad of writings contrary to truth.

So far the Catholics are happy in the audience.

Which here I renounce and refuse as things written with my hand contrary to the truth which I thought in my heart, and written for fear of death and to save my life [at this point, they must have been worried] if it might be; and that is all such bills which I have written or signed with mine own hand since my degradation [from being Archbishop] wherein I have written many things untrue, and for as much as my hand offended in writing contrary to my heart, therefore my hand shall first be punished. For if I may come to the fire, it shall first be burned. As for the pope, I refuse him as Christ's enemy and anti-Christ with all his false doctrine.

At that point, there was an uproar. It's said that Cranmer was brought to the stake with a cheerful countenance and a willing mind. He was probably the only person smiling in this crowd. When the fire was lit, he took his hand, saying, "This was the hand that wrote it and therefore shall it suffer the first punishment." Then he thrust it into the flame.

All the witnesses agree that he stood there, holding his hand in the flame. Then he was brought closer and the flames engulfed him.

You didn't have to be a Protestant bishop to merit the attentions of Mary's regime. Over the next few years, she ordered the burning of 290 individuals: 237 men and 52 women, many of them adolescents, mostly of humble background. Most of the burnings took place at Smithfield Market in London. Others were driven from their homes or imprisoned.

Why did Mary pursue a course that can only strike the modern observer as barbaric? The operative word here is, of course, "modern." Like most contemporaries, she rejected the idea of religious toleration or that two people could disagree about something so fundamental as how to worship God and still both be good people or good subjects. As the Protestant

William Cecil put it, “That state could never be in safety where there was toleration of two religions.”

Mary believed that hers was the One True Faith and that anyone who disagreed with it was a disloyal subject, heretic, and minion of the devil, and so a double menace to society, dragging her subjects not only into disobedience but, ultimately, to hell. By this argument, to allow two faiths in England was tantamount to acquiescing in her subjects’ damnation, something that no good mother in the Great Chain of Being could do. It was Mary’s solemn duty to cut out the cancer before it spread.

In her defense, it should be pointed out that what she really wanted were recantations, not actual burnings. The hope was that with a few examples, people would change their minds. In her mind, the Protestant martyrs brought their own fates upon themselves by their stubborn refusal to see the light.

You should also remember that these weren’t the only Tudor martyrs to religion. Henry VII burnt Lollards at the stake. Henry VIII executed both Lutheran heretics and Catholic traitors. He was an equal opportunity persecutor. Elizabeth I would execute about 250 Catholics, just about the same number as Mary, albeit it mostly priests and far more reluctantly. Elizabeth didn’t want to do it, but she felt she was forced to by Parliament, as you will learn.

Given that long bloody history, why do we remember this Tudor as Bloody Mary? Why did the fires of Smithfield prove to be a public relations disaster for the Marian regime and for the cause of Catholicism in England? Why didn’t Marian England become devoutly, uniformly Catholic?

Mostly because Marian England didn’t last long enough—not because her subjects were already Protestants. In fact, there’s plenty of evidence that it was working. The Protestant martyrs weren’t recanting, but in fact, in the countryside, there’s plenty of evidence of people going back to the old ways with not really all that much grumbling. Three hundred people are not that many people given the total population of England. It might have worked had her reign lasted or had she had an heir.

As for the reputation of Bloody Mary, what happened here is once her reign ended in 1558, Protestants began to write its history, in particular, John Foxe, who wrote the *Acts and Monuments of the English People*, better known as *The Book of Martyrs*. This work portrayed the burning of each martyr in the most grisly, but also inspiring, detail.

Take Foxe's description of the burning of Bishop Hooper in February 1555. Bishop Hooper was not the most popular clergyman in England. As bishop of Gloucester and Worcester, he'd been anything but popular with his flock. He was a zealous busybody who constantly tested his clergy's knowledge of the Bible and enquired into the morals of the laity—the sort of clergyman who can sometimes annoy the people in his flock.

Thanks to Foxe, what people remembered about Hooper was how he died at the hands of Catholic persecutors:

When he was black in the mouth and his tongue swollen that he could not speak, yet his lips went till they were shrunk to the gums. He did knock his breasts with his hands until one of his arms fell off and then knocked still with the other what time the fat, water, and blood dropped out at his fingers' ends, until by renewing of the fire his strength was gone and his hand did cleave fast in knocking to the iron upon his breast. So immediately bowing forwards, he yielded up his spirit.

With prose like that, Foxe's *The Book of Martyrs* became the bestselling work in English after the Bible. The Protestant martyrs sank deep into the consciousness of the English people. English schoolchildren were raised on these stories. Given the shortage of Catholic priests, the lack of a Catholic polemical tradition in response, and the long Protestant reign of Queen Elizabeth subsequently, the Catholic side of this story, including the stories of Catholic martyrdom and Protestant cruelty (remember Thomas More? Bishop Fisher? Elizabeth's martyrs?), was simply not told. Over the course of the next century, as the English faced Catholic invasions from abroad and plots at home, Foxe's stories of Mary's cruelty would convince his readers that God had chosen them as an elect Protestant nation facing the forces of the cruel Catholic anti-Christ.

With all that, Mary and the Catholics might still have gotten to write this history if she had lived longer or produced an heir, but neither was to happen.

In January 1557, now Philip II of Spain showed that he was interested in something other than an heir by declaring war on France. He expected Mary's England, which he regarded as community property, to join him in this war. The Privy Council and the Parliament opposed it. England was in the grip of an economic crisis and an influenza epidemic. It lacked an adequate army.

Mary overruled her councilors on two grounds. First, there was loyalty to her husband. Philip willed it. Remember, Mary always fulfills that gender role. She always does what the good girl is supposed to do. Her husband told her, "We're going to fight a war," so we're going to fight a war.

The second reason was there were lots of nobles who were interested in this war for the glory that it would bring. Interestingly, a lot of them were Protestant nobles, who in January 1557 are betting that Mary's going to be around a long time, and they want to prove that they're loyal. They want to undo the reputation they may have created under Edward VI or during Wyatt's Rebellion.

The war went badly, partly because Parliament refused to pay for it. In January 1558, the French surprised and captured the last English possession in France, Calais. Calais had no real strategic significance to England anymore, but its psychological importance was immense. This was the last outpost of that continental empire that stretched back to William the Conqueror. It was associated with the great warrior kings like Edward III and Henry V. Now, Mary, a woman and a Catholic, had lost it. For many of her subjects, this summed up all the lost opportunities of the reign. Mary herself remarked to her ladies-in-waiting that, "When I am dead and opened, you will find Calais lying in my heart." They would not have to wait very long.

During the spring and summer of 1558, Mary once again thought herself pregnant. In fact, she was probably suffering from a uterine tumor and dropsy. Her reign is built upon irony upon irony. As late as early November

1558, she hoped for a miracle—that this was the pregnancy. By the way, at this point, Philip hasn't even been in the country. It would be a virgin birth. It would be a miracle.

Her Privy Council was more hardheaded. They persuaded her to finally recognize Elizabeth as her heir, so as to avoid the confusion of 1553. Up to this point, Elizabeth had lived as shadowy and tenuous an existence as Mary had done before her accession. Disowned, then reinstated by her father, she had gotten along better with the Protestant Edward than with the Catholic Mary, who always resented Elizabeth's mother. Remember that in Mary's eyes, Elizabeth's mother was the woman who had displaced her own mother.

Mary also suspected Elizabeth of being a secret Protestant, which was true, and of disloyalty. In fact, Elizabeth had been the focus of a number of Protestant plots against the queen, but she was careful to avoid much contact with the plotters, some of whom had gone to the block (by the way, without naming her). She had been careful to avoid any overt act of disloyalty.

As a consequence, the most that Mary felt able to do was keep Elizabeth under house arrest, sometimes in the Tower, sometimes in the countryside. Usually, there'd be an elaborate cat and mouse game. Mary would set Elizabeth about with spies and jailors, but for the most part these men were no match for the wit and cunning of Princess Elizabeth. She was basically able to talk her way out of any accusation.

With the smell of death wafting over from Whitehall Palace, Elizabeth began to hold court. On 17 November, she was informed that her sister had died. As Mary died, she apparently was delirious. When she came out of the delirium in the early hours of 17 November, she told her attendants that she had dreamed of little children who had approached her and given her flowers. Even at the end, this strange reign is such a combination of the touching and the cruel. One never knows how to feel about Mary. She always gives historians a hard time.

Later that morning, Mary died and Elizabeth was informed that she was now queen. England was to be ruled by another female.

It has been said that Mary's reign, like her person, was sterile. Possessing many Tudor virtues, she lacked the two most essential of all: an instinct for what her people wanted and the flexibility to give it to them. Rather, she followed her Catholic conscience and her Spanish heart to disaster, forcing on her subjects a Spanish marriage they didn't want, a bloody Counter-Reformation, and a losing war.

Admittedly, with more time she might have bent the country to her will as her father had done. Without that time, or an heir to continue her policies, they were subject to reversal, repudiation, and excoriation by her successor.

Worse, Mary Tudor had confirmed everything that contemporaries feared about female rule. She left her sister a legacy of religious disunity, military defeat, financial exhaustion, economic hardship, and even a fatal influenza epidemic that good Protestants blamed on the sinfulness of the regime. Of course, she left the baggage of her gender. Who could anticipate with optimism rule by another queen?

Boy, were they in for a surprise.

# Young Elizabeth: 1558

## Lecture 16

Perhaps no figure in English history has inspired more myth than Queen Elizabeth I. ... She had many personas: the virgin queen, “Gloriana,” and good Queen Bess to her subjects. To her enemies, she was the heretic and bastard daughter of that whore, Anne Boleyn. In her day, scores of artists and writers celebrated or excoriated these images. Afterwards, legions of writers, some scholarly and some popular, as well as filmmakers and playwrights, have sought to relate and explain the achievements of her reign and the mystique that she held for her people.

According to legend, Elizabeth’s ascension to the throne of England was greeted with rapturous rejoicing. In fact, although committed Protestants were happy to be delivered from “Bloody Mary,” most people had little to cheer about. Among England’s many troubles, it was still embroiled in a disastrous war with France; the economy continued to suffer from depressions in agriculture and trade; the royal treasury was nearly bankrupt; an influenza epidemic raged, often fatally; and religious strife continued to tear the country. Perhaps worse in her subjects’ eyes, all these problems were left in the lap of another female. Surely, the last reign demonstrated the consequences of defying the Great Chain of Being and giving power to a woman? This attitude, did not, of course, figure on the personality of Elizabeth Tudor.

The new queen was, like her father, larger than life, which makes her difficult to pin down. Elizabeth’s positive qualities were many, and they, too, recalled her father: She was young (25) and good-looking. This would come in handy. She was exceptionally intelligent and well educated, fluent in Latin, French, Spanish, and Italian; wrote poetry; played the virginals (a keyboard instrument); and danced. She was athletic, enjoying both riding and hunting.

Where even Mary’s good qualities proved detrimental, Elizabeth’s bad ones had their advantages. She was (again, like her father) vain, imperious, and self-centered. But these qualities probably prevented male politicians from



dismissing her. She was often indecisive. Male politicians then and male historians since have often criticized her for this. But caution, even hesitancy to commit to one policy or action, made sense given Elizabeth's history and England's precarious situation. What often seems like hesitation (over marriage, foreign policy, Mary, Queen of Scots) may have been prudence, even mastery in playing one side off against another. We see this in her handling of court factions.

Historians have tended to divide Elizabeth's court into two broad factions, led by two very different men. William Cecil (from 1571, Lord Burghley) was trained as a lawyer and had served as secretary to Protector Somerset and Secretary of State to Edward VI. He was a brilliant and hard-working administrator who served Elizabeth, first, as Secretary of State and, from 1572, as Lord Treasurer. As his responsibilities increased, he became ever more prudent and cautious, urging the queen to maintain good relations with the Catholic powers, France and Spain, and avoid expensive and bloody wars. He gathered about him a circle of like-minded, if somewhat colorless, administrators, such as Sir Nicholas Bacon, Lord Keeper of the Great Seal; Sir Francis Knollys, Vice Chamberlain of the Household; and Thomas Radcliffe, Earl of Sussex, Lord President of the North. These cautious men stood in sharp contrast to the other great court circle and its leader.

Robert Dudley (from 1564, Earl of Leicester) was a born courtier and soldier. He was dashing and handsome and served Elizabeth as her Master of the Horse, which gave him constant access to her person. Where Cecil urged caution, Dudley wanted action, in particular a Protestant crusade against the Catholic powers, which he would, of course, lead as Elizabeth's general. His circle attracted soldiers, poets, and other flamboyant characters, such as Sir Christopher Hatton, Lord Chancellor, and Sir Francis Walsingham, Secretary of State (and master of the queen's spies). Historians used to see these groups as constantly at each other's throats. More recent work demonstrates that most of the time, they got along well with each other, agreeing on basic principles, such as their loyalty to the queen. But at times of crisis, they fought spirited battles in council and at court. One of these groups appealed to Elizabeth's head; the other, to her heart.

The queen made clear which organ she would listen to in the very first crisis of her reign, that over her marriage. As with Mary, contemporaries were uncomfortable with the idea of an unmarried queen. As with Mary, Elizabeth had been ignored before her succession; now, she was the most desirable woman in Europe. Only a few men had the pedigree and importance to hope for the hand of the new Queen of England. Foreign candidates included the widowed Philip II of Spain, the boy-king Charles IX of France, King Erik XIV of Sweden, and the Archduke Charles (Habsburg) of Styria. Local boys with the right pedigree included the Earl of Arundel and Sir William Pickering. But Elizabeth hesitated. She remembered what Mary's loveless and controversial marriage had done to the country, and her heart was already spoken for.

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**Elizabeth realized that, unlike her father, because she was a woman, marriage was a card she could play but once.**

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Elizabeth was clearly smitten with Robert Dudley, but there were two drawbacks to her attraction. Dudley was considered an upstart, not sufficiently weighty to be the next co-ruler of England. In particular, he was opposed by the Cecil faction. Dudley was already married to Amy *née* Robsart, Lady Dudley. When Lady Dudley turned up dead at the bottom of a stairwell in Cunnor Hall, Oxfordshire, many suspected that her ambitious husband had had her killed. In fact, Lady Dudley was suffering from breast cancer; she may simply have fallen down the stairs due to weakness, or she may have thrown herself down the stairs in dejection. In any case, the scandal brought Elizabeth to her senses: In 1566, she finally repudiated any notion of marrying her "sweet Robin." Instead, Elizabeth became the unpossessable virgin queen, married to her people of England. Dudley remained Elizabeth's chief favorite, being raised to the peerage as Earl of Leicester in 1564.

Elizabeth was urged again and again to get married by her Privy Council, by Parliament, and by her people. As the reign progressed, she learned to use the possibility of her marriage as a diplomatic card, especially with the Catholic powers. After all, why invade England when it might be won through love? During diplomatic crises, especially, a succession of French princes and imperial aristocrats courted her. But Elizabeth realized that, unlike her father, because she was a woman, marriage was a card she could play but

once. Once played, her freedom of maneuver and that of England was over. In the end, she never played it, perhaps because she wanted to preserve that freedom of maneuver; perhaps because she could not see herself ruled by any man; or perhaps because the right guy never came along. Instead, she became the virgin queen, wedded, not to some mere man, but to her first love, the people of England. She played out this metaphor masterfully, referring to the English people as her “good husbands,” demonstrating her common touch by going out amongst them on frequent progresses, and cultivating an image of virginal purity, requiring defense by the gentlemen of England.

The image of a virtuous virgin queen leading the nation against its would-be ravishers evolved, by the 1580s, into that of “Gloriana,” a benevolent goddess above mere mortal desires and certainly above faction. In effect, she replaced the Catholic image of the Virgin Mary as a symbol of the softer, more accessible side of power. Elizabeth urged artists, poets, and playwrights to portray her as a semi-divine being, no mere woman but a symbol of England. She guarded this image jealously. This image would come in handy as she faced challenges to her rule both at home and abroad. ■

### Suggested Reading

Bucholz and Key, *Early Modern England*, chap. 4, secs. 1–3.

Guy, *Tudor England*, chap. 9.

Haigh, *Elizabeth I*.

MacCaffrey, *Elizabeth I*.

### Questions to Consider

1. Given contemporary views of women and the poor performance of Queen Mary, why did Elizabeth face no opposition at her accession to the Crown in 1558?
2. Was Elizabeth’s notorious prevarication and apparent indecision a masterful game designed to keep her options open and her friends and enemies off balance or evidence of a lack of a real long-term plan?

## Young Elizabeth: 1558

### Lecture 16—Transcript

By the end of the last lecture, England's situation was unhappy in almost every way. Queen Mary had foisted on her people (and left her sister, Elizabeth) an unpopular Spanish alliance, an unsuccessful war, and a divisive religious settlement. She could not be blamed for the country's economic woes or the influenza epidemic, but all would make her successor's task all the harder.

Above all, it could be argued that Mary by her death had foisted on England another queen. Elizabeth would have to carry the baggage, made heavier by her sister, of being a female ruler in a world that, according to the Great Chain of Being, was supposed to be run by men.

This lecture begins with the situation in England on the day of Elizabeth's accession to the throne. It then examines her character; the style of her court and her ability to balance off court factions; her attitude towards marriage and her feelings for Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester; and the beginnings of the cult of the virgin queen, "Gloriana," all the while asking why did this woman so capture the imaginations of her contemporaries as well as our own?

Perhaps no figure in English history has inspired more myth than Queen Elizabeth I, who ruled from 1558–1603. She had many personas: the virgin queen, "Gloriana," and good Queen Bess to her subjects. To her enemies, she was the heretic and bastard daughter of that whore, Anne Boleyn. In her day, scores of artists and writers celebrated or excoriated these images.

Afterwards, legions of writers, some scholarly and some popular, as well as filmmakers and playwrights, have sought to relate and explain the achievements of her reign and the mystique that she held for her people. Like her father, she has had her share of memorable portrayals: Dame Flora Robson, Betty Davis, Beverly Sills, Kate Jackson, Cate Blanchett, Dame Judy Dench, and Quentin Crisp. In fact, I have actually team-taught a semester-long course whose subject was just Elizabeth's image and her uses of it.

She herself was fully aware of the importance of that image. She cultivated the mask of royalty so effectively that one never knows if one is seeing the real Elizabeth. Still, we have to try to find her, if only because so many of the age's triumphs and failures were intimately bound up with her words and actions.

One place to begin to separate myth from reality is with that first day of her reign. According to legend, the new queen was greeted with rapturous rejoicing as if everybody knew that she was going to be Queen Elizabeth. It is true that few openly grieved for Mary. It's also true that committed Protestants did cheer, for they were happy to be delivered from the Catholic queen and her persecutions. Elizabeth's advisors, who were also quite happy to have jobs, did proclaim the dawn of a new, more optimistic and glorious age under a queen who would bring harmony and peace.

Most people had little to cheer about. One government official summed up the situation as follows: "The queen poor, the realm exhausted, the nobility poor and decayed, want of good captains and soldiers, the people out of order, justice not executed, all things dear, the French king bestriding the realm." Indeed, England was still embroiled in a disastrous war with France. Trouble threatened on the Scottish border. The economy was suffering from depressions in agriculture and trade, as well as inflation and a debased coinage. The royal treasury was nearly bankrupt. An influenza epidemic raged, often fatally. Religion, far from being a consolation amid all this woe, was a source of more trouble, as the nation lay torn and bleeding over the best way to worship God.

Of course, the worst of all these problems in her subjects' eyes was that they were left in the lap of another female. Surely, the last reign had demonstrated the consequences of defying the Great Chain of Being and giving power to a woman. In this very year of 1558, the fiery Scottish preacher John Knox published the first blast of the trumpet against the monstrous regiment of women, the argument of which should be pretty obvious. Of course, Reverend Knox hadn't figured on the personality of Elizabeth Tudor.

The new queen was, like her father, larger than life, which as with her father, makes her hard to pin down. Here are the inarguable facts. First, she had

many positive qualities and they too tended to recall those of her father. First, she was young, 25-years-old in 1558. She was also good looking, an advantage that she would take advantage of. Like all Tudors, she was exceptionally intelligent, witty, and well educated. She was fluent in Latin, French, Spanish, and Italian. She wrote poetry and when she put her mind to it, could speak effectively. Like her father, she was something of a scholar. She once translated Boethius's *On the Consolations of Philosophy* into English just for fun.

Like her father, she was musical. She played the virginals (a keyboard instrument), and she danced. Like her father, she was athletic, enjoying both riding and hunting. A perhaps final similarity with her father was that she was vain and imperious. Men could flirt with her. In fact, they were encouraged to do so, but they had to be careful not to go too far, for she never forgot that she was queen.

Vanity and imperiousness would normally in any one of us—even a university professor—be considered vices, but somehow Elizabeth was good at turning her vices into virtues. In fact, you could make an argument that where Mary's virtues (her faith and her conscience) had proved detrimental, Elizabeth's vices turned out to be advantages.

Take her vanity, her imperiousness, her legendary quick temper, and her over-sharp tongue: They probably prevented male politicians from dismissing her. Her phenomenal self-centeredness, which she also shared with her father, was not out of place given the degree to which the fate of the nation hung upon her own.

The most obvious charge made against her, both during her life and by later historians, was that she was indecisive. This was often linked to her gender, as when her last favorite, Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex, complained to the French ambassador, "They labored under two things at this court: delay and inconstancy, which proceeded from the sex of the queen."

Indeed, Queen Elizabeth was capable of making her Privy Council, court, and people wait an agonizingly long time while she made up her mind. In fact, it could be argued that in the case of the biggest issues she faced—

marriage, what to do about Mary, Queen of Scots, and the succession—she never did really make up her mind. Male politicians and male historians since have often criticized her for this.

But it could also be argued that experience had taught her the dangers of committing herself too early or too overtly. What if she had done so to one of those Protestant plots under Mary? That caution—even hesitancy—to commit to one policy or action made sense given Elizabeth’s history and England’s precarious situation during her reign—that is, often at the mercy of bigger, more powerful neighbors.

In fact, I would like to argue that it’s possible that what often seems like hesitancy over marriage, foreign policy, or Mary, Queen of Scots, may have been prudence or even a mastery of herself and of others in playing one side against another, so that they would not return against her or turn against England. I would argue that we see this mastery in her handling of court faction.

Historians have tended to divide Elizabeth’s court into two very broad factions led by two very different men. On the one hand, there was a faction around William Cecil. From 1571, he will be Lord Burghley. He was trained as a lawyer and had served as Secretary to Protector Somerset and then as Secretary of State from 1550–1553. It’s a measure of his abilities that though he was clearly a Protestant and was associated with the Edwardian regime, Mary had also used him in sensitive diplomatic situations. This is a man of real ability who commands respect.

He was, in fact, a brilliant and hard-working administrator who served Elizabeth first as Secretary of State from 1558–1572, and then from 1572 as her Lord Treasurer. About 1571–1572, William Cecil, Secretary of State, will become in these lectures Lord Burghley, Lord Treasurer. You’ll have to watch for that.

Early in the reign, he was an avid promoter of foreign intervention in support of Protestant causes abroad. As his responsibilities and experience increased, he became more prudent and cautious, favoring peace as less dangerous and expensive than war. Therefore, he urged Elizabeth to maintain good relations

with the Catholic powers (France and Spain) and to avoid expensive and bloody foreign conflicts.

He gathered about him a circle of like-minded, if somewhat colorless, administrators, like Sir Nicholas Bacon, Lord Keeper of the Great Seal; Sir Francis Knollys, Vice Chamberlain of the Household; and Thomas Radcliffe, Earl of Sussex, Lord President of the North. You've never heard of them, right?

These cautious men stood in sharp contrast to the circle that gathered about Robert Dudley, who from 1564 was Earl of Leicester. Dudley was a younger son of the late Duke of Northumberland—you remember him from Edward VI's reign. He was a born courtier and soldier. He was dashing and handsome, and he served Elizabeth as her Master of the Horse—that is, the keeper of her stables and horses—the royal motor pool.

This may not sound like a very elevated position, but it was usually reserved for a favorite. Being Master of the Horse gave Dudley constant access to the royal person. He was always escorting the queen on horseback when traveling out of doors, and often she would invite him into the coach with herself alone. This arrangement suited Elizabeth, for where Cecil was sober and cautious, Dudley was dashing and fun. Where Cecil urged prudence, Dudley wanted action—in particular a Protestant crusade against the Catholic powers, which he would of course lead as Elizabeth's general.

Where Cecil surrounded himself with administrators and bureaucrats, Dudley's circle attracted soldiers, poets, and other flamboyant characters like Sir Christopher Hatton. Reputedly discovered by the queen for his dancing abilities, he became her Lord Chancellor and was known to court wits as the "Dancing Chancellor." He was often her mouthpiece in Parliament.

There was Sir Francis Walsingham, her Secretary of State (there were always two, by the way, at any given time, so there will be a lot of people who will be Secretary of State). He was also the master of the queen's spies.

These two men—Cecil and Dudley—were the nucleus of two great clientage networks at court and in the country. Remember, under the early Tudors or



late-medieval monarchs, we would have used the word “affinities.” These two men would have headed vast private armies, but the Tudors had done a pretty good job of outlawing affinities and taming the nobility. This meant that from now on, the great fight was not over somebody’s castle in Yorkshire; it was over the spoils at court. Note how the Tudors have made themselves the center of the dance. That was always Henry VII’s and Henry VIII’s strategy.

Historians have tended to see these two great clientage networks as constantly at each other’s throats. More recent work demonstrates that most of the time, they actually got along pretty well with each other. They socialized with each other. They intermarried with each other. They agreed on basic principles. They were all Protestants, and they were all loyal to the queen, but at times of crisis, they fought spirited battles in council and at court.

One of these groups appealed to Elizabeth’s head. The other one appealed to her heart. The queen would make clear which organ she would prefer or listen to in the very first crisis of her reign, that over her marriage.

As with Mary, the first major issue facing the new queen was her single state. As with Mary, contemporaries were uncomfortable with the idea of an unmarried queen. It violated the Great Chain of Being. It left uncertain the succession. This was a more pressing issue for Elizabeth even than for Mary, because remember that for the moment, she was the last of her line—a moment that would actually last until her death in 1603, but nobody knew that.

It also left uncertain what would probably be decided by the queen’s marriage. The queen’s marriage would probably be the clearest indication of England’s diplomatic orientation, if she married a Spaniard, a German, or a Frenchman. It would also probably determine the religious settlement.

As with Mary, Elizabeth had been ignored before her succession. Now, she was the most desirable woman in Europe. But only a few men had the pedigree and importance to hope for the hand of the new Queen of England. Foreign candidates included the King of France, the sickly boy-king Charles IX; Erik XIV of Sweden; and Archduke Charles (Habsburg) of Styria.

After a decent interval following the burial of his previous Tudor wife, even Philip II put himself gallantly forward. He was perfectly willing to rescue Elizabeth from her single state—it was very good of him. He of course wanted to preserve the Habsburg-Tudor alliance at all costs. Remember, this is a man who isn't terribly interested in heirs.

There were local boys with the right pedigree. They included the Earl of Arundel and Sir William Pickering. Elizabeth characteristically hesitated. There were probably two reasons for this. She remembered what Mary's loveless and controversial marriage had done to her sister and to the country, and her heart was already spoken for: Elizabeth was clearly smitten with Robert Dudley.

As Master of the Horse, Dudley used every opportunity to be with the queen, often, contemporaries observed, alone. When they were not alone, it was obvious from her looks and her actions that Queen Elizabeth had strong feelings for her "sweet Robin," but would she marry him?

There were two drawbacks. First, Dudley was considered an upstart, not sufficiently weighty to be the next co-ruler of England. In particular, he was on this opposed vehemently by the Cecil faction. Here's where I disagree with some historians who wanted to paint the Cecil-Dudley relationship as entirely happy. At crucial moments like this, the Cecils come out against Dudley.

There was a second inconvenient fact. It was that Dudley was already married to Amy *née* Robsart, Lady Dudley (Robsart being her maiden name). In September 1560, Lady Dudley turned up dead at the bottom of a stairwell at Cumnor Hall in Oxfordshire. Needless to say, many suspected that the ambitious Dudley had had her killed. In fact, this is a bit like the princes in the Tower. Dudley certainly had motive and opportunity, but other explanations are possible too. Specifically, we know that Lady Dudley was suffering from breast cancer. It is possible that she fell down the stairs in a moment of physical weakness. It is also possible (there is evidence to suggest depression) that she threw herself down the stairs in a moment of dejection.

As we've already learned time and time again, perception is everything in politics, and here too the perception was scandal. The Spanish ambassador wrote, a little hysterically, "Assuredly it is a matter full of shame and infamy. Likely enough a revolution may come of it. The queen may be sent to the Tower, and they may make a king of the Earl of Huntingdon, who is a great heretic, calling in a party of France to help them."

Like most ambassadors, de la Quadra (this man's name) was carried away by rumor and perhaps wishful thinking. Ambassadors are not always the best source of sober political information about the country in which they're serving.

This event did bring Elizabeth to her senses. By October, she assured Cecil that she would not marry Dudley. In 1556, she finally crushed all hope of marrying her sweet Robin with the words, "I will have but one mistress and no master."

Dudley remained Elizabeth's chief favorite to the end of his days, being raised to the peerage as Earl of Leicester in 1564. Elizabeth would be urged to get married again and again almost to the end of her days by her Privy Council, Parliament (which we now know was put up to it by privy councilors), and her people.

As the reign progressed, she learned to use the possibility of her marriage as a diplomatic trump card, especially with the Catholic powers. After all, why invade England when it might be won through love? As a result, during the first half of the reign, especially during diplomatic crises, she was constantly courted by an endless succession of French princes and imperial aristocrats. Elizabeth realized that unlike her father, because she was a woman, marriage was a card that she could play but once. She wouldn't get away with multiple divorces. Once played, her freedom of maneuver, and therefore England's, was over.

In the end, she never played the card. Maybe she wanted to preserve freedom of maneuver. Maybe she just couldn't see herself ruled by any man. Perhaps the right guy just never came along. I find myself open to all three of these possibilities.

Instead, she cultivated the image of the virgin queen, wedded not to some mere man, but to her first love, the people of England. She played out this metaphor masterfully. She told her first Parliament, “And in the end, this shall be for me sufficient, that a marble stone shall declare that a queen having reigned such a time lived a virgin.” She referred to her subjects publicly as “all my husbands, my good people.”

In making this appeal, Elizabeth played on her natural advantages. Remember that unlike Mary, she’s all English, of an English mother and an English father. More than any other Tudor, she has the common touch. She frequently proves this on processions through London or from palace-to-palace in an open chair, or in elaborate formal public entries to other cities. She often went on summer progresses through the Home Counties on which she stopped, to their great cost, at the splendid homes of her nobility. She did this to show them favor. She did this to save money—she wouldn’t have to pay her court. But above all, she did this to show her face.

When abroad, she would invariably be mobbed. Instead of shrinking from human contact, she plunged in. According to the Spanish ambassador, she “ordered her carriage to be taken where the crowds seemed thickest.”

I’d like to take a moment now to study her technique, for I think it demonstrates her to have been a masterful politician, just about from the first day of the reign. What I’m going to do is read a description of her coronation procession through the city of London on 14 January 1559. I must warn you that this is a fairly long quote, which I will interrupt with my own commentary. My excuse for the long quote is that I think it tells us a lot, and also don’t forget, we don’t have video of this coronation procession. What we have is Elizabethan prose.

In the afternoon, she passed from the Tower through the city of London, to Westminster [which is the traditional coronation route: from the Tower of London in the East to Westminster in the West] most royally furnished, both for her person and for her train, knowing right well that in pompous ceremonies, a secret of government doth much consist for that the people are naturally both taken and held with exterior shows.

That may demonstrate a fairly low opinion of the discrimination of the people, but what it proves is that like all Tudors, Elizabeth knew the importance of getting out there, showing her face. Remember that Henry VII did this, and Henry VIII did this. She knew the importance of being available in this way to her people.

Accompanied by the nobility and many gentlemen in rich attire, she passed by pageants, through arches and amidst all sorts of demonstrations.

You should imagine a crowd along the streets, but you should also imagine all sorts of little tableaux, posters, and signs for her benefit. Some were carefully crafted by the local authorities, while some were spontaneous and came just from spectators—from people.

The queen was not negligent on her part to descend to all pleasing behavior, which seemed to proceed from a natural gentleness of disposition and not from any strained desire of popularity of insinuation. She gave due respect to all sorts of persons wherein the quickness of her spirit did work more actively than did her eyes.

She's not making a distinction. She's not only paying attention to the Lord Mayor of London. She's also paying attention to this poor man and that old woman there.

When people made the air ring with praying for to God for her prosperity, she thanked them with exceeding liveliness both of countenance and voice, and wished neither prosperity nor safety to herself which might not be for their common good.

Elizabeth will hark back on this theme constantly: Everything she does is for their good. She does not think of herself. She only thinks of them, her good people, all her good husbands, like a good wife sacrificing herself for the family.

As she passed the companies of the city [that's the different trade guilds, the shoemakers, fishmongers, and the barrel makers (the

coopers)] standing in their liveries, she took particular knowledge of them, and graced them with many witty formalities of speech.

I'd like to dwell on that particular knowledge. This is like any experienced politician who's done his homework: "Oh yes, you're the coopers. You run that school over in this ward over here. I know all about you. You make wonderful barrels. I love your barrels."

It's also a bit like those moments when politicians on reviewing stands point to individuals in the crowd. Of course, we all think they're pointing at us, and they remember the time they met us in a parking lot. It's brilliant manipulation of people.

She diligently both observed and commended such devices [literally signs that people have made, like people make posters at baseball games and political demonstrations] as were presented to her, and too that sometimes caused her coach to stand still.

Let's stop a minute and devote some attention to this sign.

Here a Bible in English, richly covered, was let down unto her by a silk lace from a child that represented truth. She kissed both her hands [this is before touching the Bible] and then with both her hands, she received it, and then kissed it, afterwards applied it to her breast, and lastly held it up thanking the city especially for that gift and promising to be a diligent reader thereof.

This Bible will sit on my nightstand!

Of course, this is also a sign to a heavily Protestant city, because London was really the hotbed of Protestantism at this time, that, "I'm a Protestant. I love the Bible." They didn't hand her a crucifix; they handed her a Bible.

When any good wishes were cast forth for her virtuous and religious government, she would lift up her hands to heaven, and desire the people to answer, "Amen!"

Now, we're at a revival meeting; now she's become a preacher.

When it was told to her that an ancient citizen turned his back and wept, she said, "I warrant you it is for joy."

There's her quick wit. In very deed, it was.

She cheerfully received not only rich gifts from persons of worth, but nosegays, flowers, rosemary branches, and such like presents offered unto her from very mean [that is poor] "persons."

You can imagine they're bringing their junk. They're bringing little flowers from their garden. They're bringing their little craft projects that they've made on their table, and they're handing them to her. Of course, she's treating every single one as if it is the crown itself.

It is incredible how often she caused her coach to stay when any maid offered to approach her, whether to make petition or whether to manifest their loving affections.

Perhaps she's not literally pressing the flesh, but she allowed the commonest of her subjects—her "good husbands"—to approach her, kiss her hand, tell her about their problems, and to give her advice.

The result was that hereby the people, to whom no music is so sweet as the affability of their prince, were so strongly stirred to love and joy that all men contended how they might more effectually testify the same, some with plausible acclamation, some with sober prayers, many with silent and true-hearted tears, which were seen to melt in their eyes. Afterwards, departing home, they so stretched everything to the highest strain that they inflamed the like affection in others.

With PR like that, who needs television and video?

The young Elizabeth's image was that of a loving bride, a woman in need of her people's advice and of a pure virgin who needed to be defended by

the gentlemen of England. The image of a virtuous queen leading the nation against its would-be ravishers eventually evolved by the 1580s into that of “Gloriana,” a benevolent goddess above mere mortal desires and certainly above faction. In effect, Elizabeth replaced the Catholic image of the Virgin Mary, becoming a Protestant symbol of the softer, more accessible side of power. This is one of the things the film *Elizabeth I* think got exactly right, among many other things that it did not.

Elizabeth urged artists, poets, and playwrights to portray her as a semi-divine being—no mere woman, but a symbol of England. She was praised in high poetical works like Spenser’s *The Faerie Queen* as Diana, Belphoebe, Astraea, and Gloriana. She was praised in ballads and love songs as “Sweet Bessie.” In paintings, she was depicted not as human, but more like one of those medieval saintly icons, emerging from out of the map of England in the Ditchley portrait, or facing the future while her navy defeated the Spanish Armada in the background of the Armada portrait.

In fact, she regulated this image as carefully as any minister of propaganda in a totalitarian state. Courtiers fell or were denied patronage if they wrote something that did not please the queen. Her visage was widely distributed. Universities and guilds hung state portraits. Courtiers wore cameos. Ordinary people wore base metal medallions or bought woodcuts and engravings.

In 1596, the Privy Council suppressed unauthorized images, especially ones showing her by that time in old age. Elizabeth only wanted to be depicted as the youthful virgin queen. Her image freezes about 1580. It doesn’t change. The woman doesn’t age. We have these verbal descriptions of her—her teeth falling out or turning black, her hair falling out—and yet she’s always the queen we imagine from those early portraits. Clearly, Elizabeth Tudor knew the importance of image—of maintaining her attractions to her fickle spouses. Their affection would be necessary to sustain her as she faced challenges to her rule, both at home and abroad.

In this lecture, we have met Elizabeth Regina. We have assessed the strengths and weaknesses of her personality, watched her maneuver between two great court factions, and seen her deal with one of the first great crises



of her reign, that of her marriage, by not dealing with it at all, or at least not taking irrevocable action.

Remaining desired but untaken, Queen Elizabeth evolved into a more godlike figure than any male who ever sat atop the earthly Chain of Being, turning the seeming disadvantage of her gender into a plus.

Long before that image was frozen, she would have to deal with another crisis in which her gender would prove a handicap. In the next lecture, she would have to settle her people in their religion.

# The Elizabethan Settlement: 1558–68

## Lecture 17

**When in January, on the way to the state opening of Parliament, she ran into the Abbot of Westminster and his monks carrying lighted tapers, she dismissed them. “Away with these torches, for we see very well.”**

Englishmen and women were deeply divided about religion in 1558. Because of this fact and the international situation, the Elizabethan settlement in religion would not be easy. A Catholic settlement would have pleased the great powers of Europe, but it would have been unacceptable to Protestants after the bitter legacy of Bloody Mary. A Protestant settlement would have pleased the Marian exiles but alienated committed Catholics and the Catholic powers, especially France and Spain.

Fortunately, Elizabeth I was well-suited for compromise. Unlike Edward or Mary, she had never committed publicly to one side or the other. Though temperamentally drawn to Protestant theology, Elizabeth was, like her father, also attracted to Catholic ceremony and hierarchy. Above all, she had no desire to make “windows into men’s souls.” That is, she cared less about what her subjects believed inwardly than that they were loyal outwardly. She realized that England needed a religious settlement that most people could accept, whatever its doctrinal inconsistencies.

The Settlement of 1559–1563 and the resultant Church of England was, therefore, a compromise. After the opposing Catholic bishops were sequestered in the Tower, Parliament passed a series of statutes with concessions for both sides. In a sop to conservatives, Elizabeth was named Supreme Governor of the Church of England. They could not abide a female “Supreme Head.” In a concession to Catholics, clergy had to swear an oath to the Supreme Governor, but the laity was excused. Protestants were pleased that the Act of Uniformity of 1559 required all the queen’s subjects to attend Sunday services conducted according to the second, more Protestant, Book of Common Prayer. But Catholics secured a revision allowing for transubstantiation, elaborate vestments, and Catholic rituals, such as the sign of the cross.

The Treason Act of 1563 made it a capital crime to express support for the pope or to *twice* refuse to swear the oath of allegiance. This last gave Catholics some elbow room. The Thirty-Nine Articles of Faith of 1563 articulated a Protestant theology, embracing justification by faith and denouncing purgatory and the mass. But the structure of the Church remained hierarchical. In short, the genius of the Elizabethan religious settlement is that it thinks Protestant but looks Catholic. The doctrine of the Church of England was Protestant. The structure and much of the ritual of the Church of England were reminiscent of Catholicism. Thus, it appealed to what each religious tradition most cherished: for Protestants, the Word, and for Catholics, ritual and structure.

Though Elizabeth's new Church of England won the cooperation, if not yet the hearts, of most of her subjects, there were exceptions. Many committed Protestants regarded the compromise of 1559–1563 as temporary. They wanted additional reform to purify the Church of Catholic rituals, practices, and so on. Within a decade, their critics would label them "Puritans." Puritans did *not* want to form a separate church. They wanted their Church and society in general to conform to biblical standards and practices. In practical terms, this meant that puritans wanted to abolish elaborate vestments and Catholic rituals, such as the sign of the cross. Many Puritans wanted to reduce or eliminate the role of the bishops. Following Luther's idea of a priesthood of all believers, they wanted a more presbyterian style of church government.



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**Queen Elizabeth I compromised to establish a new Church of England, a compromise that appealed to values held deeply by Catholics and Protestants.**

Queen Elizabeth reacted negatively to the Puritans for many reasons. She saw the attack on bishops as an attack on all hierarchy and, therefore, on her position in the Great Chain of Being. She personally liked ritual and hierarchy; she did not want to alienate her Catholic subjects who liked them, too. She did not want to alienate the Catholic powers by embracing full-blown Protestantism. As long as the Church of England remained a compromise, as long as France and Spain could hope that the queen might return to Rome, they would not attack. Thus, Elizabeth ordered her bishops to persecute Puritans. Some Puritans conformed at least outwardly. Some formed separate congregations or fled abroad.

The pope and the Catholic powers took a wait-and-see attitude toward Elizabeth. The pope forbade Catholics from attending Church of England services, thus forcing them to make a choice. Most became Anglicans. But, hopeful of her return, he did not yet excommunicate Elizabeth.

In 1559, France and Spain signed the Treaty of Cateaux-Cambresis, ending the war begun in 1557. However, tensions remained, not least because of France's "Auld Alliance" with Scotland. Recall that previous Tudor attempts to force the infant Mary, Queen of Scots, to wed Edward VI had failed, driving her into the arms of Francis II of France. But in 1560, Francis died, and Mary returned to a much-changed Scotland. While Mary had been away, much of the Scottish aristocracy had embraced Calvinist Protestantism. Persecuted by Mary's mother and regent, Mary of Guise, these aristocrats had banded together in 1557, swearing to defend a Protestant "Congregation of God."

In 1559, the Lords of the Congregation rebelled against the two Marys, abolished papal jurisdiction, and began to establish a Presbyterian Church structure. The French, fearing the loss the Auld Alliance, sent troops to aid Mary of Guise. In response, the Scots Protestants asked Elizabeth for comparable help. Elizabeth and her Privy Council hesitated. To support the rebels would be to support rebellion against a legitimate and divinely sanctioned monarch. This would violate the Great Chain of Being. It would also reveal Elizabeth's Protestant sympathies to the Catholic powers. Finally, failure would invite a Franco-Scottish invasion of England. To fail to support

the rebels would leave a strong Catholic Scotland, allied with France, on England's northern border, and infuriate the Puritans.

The queen decided to support the rebels, sending money, then ships. This move was decisive. In July, all parties signed the Treaty of Edinburgh, establishing joint rule, but placing most of the power in Scotland in the hands of Protestants. Mary, now fully Queen of Scots, would have to please both sides.

Mary, Queen of Scots, is sometimes seen as a Catholic counterpart to Elizabeth I. She, too, was ambitious, intelligent, and beautiful. But where Elizabeth was cautious and shrewd, Mary was impulsive and duplicitous. Above all, where Elizabeth never put herself in the power of any man, Mary repeatedly married men who were unworthy of her. In 1565, she married Lord Darnley, who proved vain and cruel. He was murdered in 1567 by the Earl of Bothwell. In 1567, she married the Earl of Bothwell, who had abducted her! Many Scots nobles concluded that Mary was, at best, mad and, at worst, a murderess. They deposed her in favor of her infant son by Lord Darnley, who became King James VI.

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**Above all, where Elizabeth never put herself in the power of any man, Mary repeatedly married men who were unworthy of her.**

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In 1568, Mary was forced to flee south and seek the protection of her cousin, Elizabeth. Once again, a request from Scotland posed a dilemma for Elizabeth.

If she granted Mary's request, she would be harboring the next heir to the throne (thanks to her Tudor grandmother) in her own kingdom. Elizabeth remembered her own destabilizing influence under Mary. If she refused, she would be abandoning her own cousin, a legitimate monarch, and the Great Chain of Being. Elizabeth granted Mary's request. Given Mary's impulsive nature and claim to the throne, there was every reason to believe that she would be tempted to plot against Elizabeth. Given her Catholicism, those plots were likely to receive the support of the Catholic powers. In the end, one of these two women would have to go. ■

## Suggested Reading

Bucholz and Key, *Early Modern England*, chap. 4, secs. 4–7.

Guy, *Tudor England*, chap. 10.

Haigh, *English Reformations*, pt. III.

## Questions to Consider

1. What would have been the consequences for England if Elizabeth had chosen the Catholic option? What if she had chosen the Puritan?
2. Why were the English so concerned about the situation in Scotland?

# The Elizabethan Settlement: 1558–68

## Lecture 17—Transcript

In the last lecture, we confronted the personality and public image of the virgin queen. It should be obvious that that image was expressly calibrated to get people to do what Elizabeth wanted them to do, often against their will or conscience. At the very outset of the reign, that image was not yet fully formed. Therefore, she would need all the goodwill expressed in her coronation procession if she were going to solve the first intractable problem left her by her predecessors: that of religion.

This lecture examines the religious Settlement of 1559–1563, which established the Church of England. It goes on to explain the two major challenges faced by the new Church and its Supreme Governor, Elizabeth: the rise of Puritanism and the continued existence of Roman Catholics. The first problem was internal; the second was international. Therefore, we will need to examine Elizabeth's relationship with the papacy; with Scotland and her rival, Mary, Queen of Scots; and with the Catholic powers, France and Spain. That examination will continue in Lecture Eighteen.

This lecture concludes with an account of the Scottish Reformation and the rebellion against Mary, Queen of Scots; her flight into Elizabeth's protection; and the dangers faced by both women as a result. All along, the queen's ability to get people to do what she wanted them to do would be tested.

After all the to-ings and fro-ings of the previous 30 years, it should come as no surprise that English men and women were deeply divided about religion in 1558. Nor were her people Elizabeth's only worry, for her choices in religion were constrained by England's international situation. Only one thing was certain: the Elizabethan settlement in religion would not be easy.

A Catholic settlement would have pleased the great powers of Europe, but it would have been unacceptable to committed Protestants, and thanks to Bloody Mary, it would have been unacceptable even to moderate Protestants. A Protestant settlement would have displeased committed Catholics and it would have offended the Catholic powers, especially France and Spain. There's always that danger that they might invade.

Therefore, a compromise was in order. Fortunately, Elizabeth I was well-suited for compromise. Unlike Edward or Mary, Elizabeth had never committed publicly to one side or the other of the religious debate. The tea leaves were not that hard to read. Immediately upon her accession, the heresy trials stopped and all the prisoners were freed. On the first Christmas of the reign, she walked out of her own chapel when the Marian Bishop Oglethorpe elevated the host in consecration.

When in January, on the way to the state opening of Parliament, she ran into the Abbot of Westminster and his monks carrying lighted tapers, she dismissed them. “Away with these torches, for we see very well.”

It was typical of Elizabeth and the Tudors that the tea leaves didn’t all point in a single direction. Elizabeth was drawn to Protestant theology, but she had the typical Tudor love of ceremony and hierarchy. There’s a certain ambiguity about her religious beliefs. Despite the crack about torches, she retained in her chapel candles and a crucifix. That willful inconsistency is typical Tudor.

Above all, she was by contemporary standards practical, rational, and even somewhat secular. Unlike Mary or even Henry VIII, her Privy Council contained very few churchmen. Most importantly, Elizabeth had no desire to make “windows into men’s souls.” That is, she cared less about what her subjects believed inwardly than that they were outwardly loyal. She knew that England needed a religious settlement that most people could accept, whatever its doctrinal inconsistencies. She wasn’t all that worried about what it would say, just that people would go along with it. Her goal was to find consensus and compromise between her Protestant beliefs and Catholic structures and practices.

In fact, the queen wanted a more Protestant-leaning settlement than the one she eventually got, but I’ve always got to qualify that sentiment by saying that she also wanted a settlement with which Catholics would feel comfortable. There is this tension.

When Elizabeth’s government proposed an Act of Supremacy in the spring of 1559—it’s the first big piece of legislation of her first Parliament—they



were opposed in the House of Lords by the Catholic bishops and peers left over from Mary's reign. They nearly defeated the measure.

That spring—actually over the Easter recess—the queen and her advisors actually had to do a rethink on this legislation. They came up with a plan and a trick. They offered the Catholic clerics a debate on points of theology with a group of Protestant divines. The Catholic clerics agreed, and then Elizabeth added one further little stipulation: The entire debate would have to be based upon Scripture.

At this point, if you remember the Catholic relationship to Scripture, the Catholic bishops balked, at which point she was able to lock them in the Tower of London on the charge that they were disobeying a royal order to debate. As a consequence, she was able to go back to the House of Lords and have her government call the question without those Catholic bishops. As a result, no sitting bishop voted for the Act of Supremacy, which established the new Church of England in 1559.

Nevertheless, because Lords was still packed with Catholic peers, the resulting settlement was still a compromise. For example, the new Act of Supremacy named Elizabeth Supreme Governor of the Church of England, not “Supreme Head.” Religious conservatives on both sides could not accept a woman as Supreme Head. It's a form of words, but it mattered to them.

Another compromise was that while clergy had to swear an oath to the Supreme Governor, the laity was excused. That took pressure off the Catholics. The Act of Uniformity of 1559 required all the queen's subjects to attend Sunday services conducted according to the second, more Protestant Book of Common Prayer. Here's a Protestant plank, but conservatives secured a revision allowing for belief in transubstantiation. Elaborate vestments were still to be worn, and priests continued to perform the old Catholic rituals, like the sign of the cross.

The Treason Act of 1563 made it a capital crime to express support for the pope or to *twice* refuse to swear the new oath of allegiance. That “twice” of course gave Catholics more elbowroom. Again, we're trying to create a settlement that is Protestant, but within which Catholics can live.

The Thirty-Nine Articles of Faith of 1563 articulated a Protestant—even a Calvinist—theology, embracing justification by faith and predestination, and denouncing purgatory and the sacrificial mass. At the same time, the structure of the Church remained hierarchical. In effect, everyone got something out of this compromise. The queen, Protestant privy councilors, and committed Protestants in general got their way on doctrine. The queen (again) and Catholics got their way, apart from the actual text of the liturgy, on ritual and church structure.

Remarkably, this ramshackle settlement worked. I think it worked because the genius of the Church of England is that it thinks Protestant but looks Catholic. After all, the doctrine of the Church of England was Protestant, but the structure and much of the ritual of the Church were reminiscent of Catholicism. I would argue that this compromise is brilliant, because it appeals to that which each religious tradition values the most. Protestants loved the Word as contained in Scripture and the Book of Common Prayer. If you look at the words of the Anglican Church and the Thirty-Nine Articles, they're pretty consistent with Scripture, and they're pretty well Protestant.

On the other hand, what do Catholics love? Catholics love ritual. They love the sense of community that comes from the structure of their Church. For most Catholics, the ceremonies and organization of this new Church were close enough to the old, despite the abandonment of Latin, not to be offensive. In any case, most people were probably just tired of religious controversy and violence by the 1560s. Finally, you could make the argument that given the overall low level of literacy—not just general literacy, but religious literacy—in England, many people may not even have understood or cared about the new dispensation.

For whatever reason, Elizabeth's new Church of England worked. It won the cooperation, if not at first the hearts, of most of her subjects. Firm statistics are impossible, but I think that I'd like to say that something like 80–90 percent of the English people had accommodated themselves to the national Church by about 1580. That did a lot to reduce religious tension in England.

Still, there were two groups, one nominally inside the Church and one outside of it, who could not accept the new compromise Church. These two groups would give Elizabeth fits. I refer to Puritans and diehard Catholics.

First, the Puritans: Despite its Protestant theology, the most committed Protestants regarded the compromise of 1559–1563 as temporary. Their goal was to purify the Church of England of all holdovers from Catholicism. Within a decade, their critics were calling them “Puritans.”

Who were the Puritans? They started off as Marian exiles. The Marian exiles were the staunch Protestants who’d fled Mary’s wrath and gone to Europe and ended up in places like Frankfurt and Geneva and there imbibed Protestantism at its wellspring. They came back upon hearing of Mary’s death, ready to erect the new Jerusalem—to build God’s kingdom on earth. These men and their families had lost nearly everything for Protestantism, and they well remembered those from John Foxe’s *The Book of Martyrs* who had lost everything. They chafed at any accommodation with the Catholic anti-Christ. They wanted additional reformation, even continuous reformation, to purify the Church of Catholic rituals—hence Puritanism.

Unfortunately, that term is highly controversial among historians, in part because it was bestowed by Puritans’ enemies. While many contemporaries thought they knew a Puritan when they saw one, the fact is there never was a specific organization or a firm set of beliefs that we can call Puritanism. Nobody was carrying identification cards. Because the beliefs of those labeled Puritan by their enemies often changed from person-to-person or over time, historians have sometimes chosen to abandon the term. Instead, they might refer to “reforming Protestants,” or the “more enthusiastic sort of Protestants.”

That doesn’t work for me. I will continue to use the term, first, because it did mean something to contemporaries. Second, because it connects these Protestants up to something very important that was going to happen in American history, and third, because in my view there are beliefs that virtually all Puritans held. Fourth, anything else is cumbersome, wishy-washy, and just too politically correct.

What did the Puritans want? The first thing you have to understand is that the Puritans did *not* want to form a separate church from the Church of England. What they wanted to do was to work within it to purify it of Catholic belief and practice—to render it less of a “mingle mangle,” as one of them put it.

More specifically, they wanted the theology and practice of the Church to conform to Scripture—anything not found in Scripture was to be thrown out. Indeed, the more extreme Puritans wanted government and society to follow Scriptural models as well. This explains the Marian exile who stood up in 1563 and suggested that the House of Commons ought to make adultery and Sabbath-breaking capital offenses. He wanted to impose Mosaic law upon England. We’ll come back to that idea several times in this course.

Most disputes between Puritans and mainstream members of the Church of England took place over matters of religious doctrine, government and ritual. They would have liked to have changed society, but first they had to change the Church.

Chronologically, the first big Puritan controversy arose over the seemingly innocuous matter of what the priests should wear at Church of England services. Puritans associated colorful vestments with Catholic practice. They feared that they distracted from the word of God. They wanted their ministers to wear plain black.

In 1563, they petitioned Parliament to abolish compulsory wearing of the surplice, the use of organ in church services, the sign of the cross, as well as the remaining Holy Days. In 1564, Elizabeth rather foolishly, and certainly provocatively, decided to take up this challenge. She issued an unequivocal defense of all of these practices, especially vestments. Then she ordered her bishops to enforce them.

This had two results. First, some clergy were suspended for refusing to comply. The second result was that Puritans now had a new target: the bishops. In 1570, Thomas Cartwright, a professor of divinity at Cambridge University, delivered a series of lectures critical of the bishops—the Church of England in general, but especially the stewardship of the Episcopal bench.

The queen responded by removing Cartwright from his professorship. At this point, I should remind you that Oxford and Cambridge were Church foundations, which meant, of course, that by the 1560s, they were run by the Supreme Governor of the Church, Queen Elizabeth. She could remove any professor she wanted. Thank God, today we have tenure.

Some of Cartwright's defenders argued that the Church should not be governed hierarchically at all. I should explain that immediately upon removing Cartwright, there was a kind of explosion of pamphlets. People wrote on both sides of the issue, saying Cartwright was right or Cartwright was wrong.

Some of Cartwright's defenders argued that all the hierarchy ought to be done away with and that the Church should start over. Some wanted a more presbyterian style of church government, such as was beginning to evolve in Scotland. The idea would be that each congregation would be directed by a "presbyter," made up of teaching elders (ministers) and ruling elders (laymen). Supervision would be provided by representative synods and various councils at different levels, rising to a general assembly at the top. This is still hierarchy, but note that these are groups. This is not one individual saying what the Church should do.

After all, they argued, if the Bible shines clear in its own light, and if God desires a priesthood of all believers, who needs bishops? The answer to that is simple: Queen Elizabeth, that's who. She saw the attack on the bishops as an attack on all hierarchy and all authority, and therefore upon her position in the Great Chain of Being. If the Supreme Governor of the Church of England were to allow congregations to determine their own religious practice, wouldn't that lead to religious chaos and the virtual end of the idea of the state church? That had civil implications: If the Church of England went, there would go one of the bulwarks of loyalty and stability.

Worse, think about this one: If Elizabeth conceded this freedom in religious matters, wouldn't she have to concede a similar freedom in political matters? If the Bible shines clear in its own light, how about Magna Carta? Should people be allowed to interpret that according to their own lights as well?

In fact, you should understand that Puritans were not by and large political radicals. They certainly weren't democrats. They didn't envision religious, social, or political chaos. Believe it or not, the Puritans believed, with immense naiveté, that if everybody read the Bible, everybody would come to the same conclusion as to what it meant. They didn't actually think there would be all this democracy and people would be disagreeing.

From Elizabeth's point of view, though, no matter how conservative they claimed to be, the very fact that they're disagreeing with her makes them radical.

Nor were these the only reasons for Elizabeth to dislike the Puritans—after all, she actually personally liked ritual and hierarchy—nor did she want to alienate her Catholic subjects, who liked them too. Finally, she didn't want to alienate the Catholic powers by embracing full-blown Protestantism. As long as the Church of England remained a compromise, then France and Spain might stay their hand. They wouldn't attack.

Elizabeth ordered her bishops to persecute Puritans. In 1576, she ordered Archbishop Grindal, the Archbishop of Canterbury, to suppress "prophesyings," which were just meetings of clergymen for sermonizing and Bible study. Grindal was a Marian exile. He believed in the prophesyings. He refused.

Since Archbishops of Canterbury served for life, the only thing Elizabeth could do was suspend him. When he died in 1583, she replaced him with a noted anti-Puritan and an attacker of Cartwright named John Whitgift. Whitgift and his successor as Archbishop, Richard Bancroft, became the scourge of the Puritans. They used the royal court of high commission to eject non-conforming clerics. This worked. The integrity of the Settlement of 1559–1563 was maintained.

Those who couldn't abide it were driven out of the Church. In 1580, a clergyman named Robert Browne established an independent congregation at Norwich. The following year, he and the Brownist community moved to the Netherlands. In 1593, the government executed a number of Puritan writers, leading more to leave. Some of these people would end up in America.

Most Puritans stayed within the Church. They tried to reform it from within. Some even became bishops. That will strike you as odd, but a Puritan bishop is possible. Others sat in Parliament. Finally, Puritans of all stripes had one more complaint, and that, of course, was the continued existence of that other group in English society that wouldn't accept the Church of England: Roman Catholics.

One reason for the queen's hostility to Puritanism was that she wanted to attract as many Catholics as possible into the Church of England. At the same time, she didn't want to offend the Catholic powers.

What did they make of all this? France and Spain were practical. In 1559, they signed the Treaty of Cateau-Cambresis, ending the war that had begun in 1557. Tensions remained, especially with France, because it maintained the "Auld Alliance" with Scotland. We'll come back to that. You need to know that the pope didn't sign the treaty. He was taking a wait-and-see attitude toward Elizabeth. He was hoping that she might drive the Church of England in a more Catholic direction.

What about Catholics themselves? In fact, most chose to conform to the Church of England. The pope actually had something to do with this. The compromise position for Catholics would be, "I'll go to Church of England services in the morning, and then I'll go to a real mass in the afternoon, maybe in a barn somewhere or in somebody's house." The pope said no. The pope said that that would be a mortal sin. As a result, he forced Catholics to make a choice: You're either going to be Church of England or you're going to be Catholic. Which are you going to be?

Most Catholics chose to join the Church of England. Of course, there remained a diehard group of loyal Catholics, less than 5 percent of the population and maybe as low as 1 percent, who held on to their Catholic faith, refused to attend the Church of England, and hoped against hope that the pope and the queen would not force them to make a further choice between their faith and their country. As long as Elizabeth looked the other way, and as long as the pope did not force them to attack her, they were going to be okay.

The big issue for these Catholics is the international situation and what will happen there. In the end, the big issue for the queen is can she continue to walk the tightrope between Puritan on the one hand and Catholicism on the other and not fall off?

The first challenge to the queen's tightrope-walking foreign policy came from Scotland. You will recall Henry VIII and Somerset's attempts to force the infant Mary, Queen of Scots, to marry Edward VI. Those attempts failed—the “rough wooing”—and Mary actually fled to France and married the future Francis II of that nation.

In 1560, Francis died and Mary returned to a much-changed Scotland. Scotland had always been poorer and less centrally governed than England, and that may help to explain why the Scottish aristocracy was more open to Protestantism. There wasn't a strong government to prevent them from reading their Bible and converting. In fact, Mary, Queen of Scots' regent, who unfortunately for us is also called Mary—Mary of Guise (I know this is your fourth Mary)—had actually encouraged the Protestants for awhile as a way to get back at Mary Tudor, the Queen of England before Elizabeth.

By 1557, Mary of Guise was alarmed by the violence of preachers like John Knox, so she began to persecute Protestants. In response, a group of Scottish nobles and lairds banded together, swearing to defend a Protestant “Congregation of God.” They had several motivations. Some were committed Protestants. Some hoped to claim Church lands as their cousins had done in England. Some feared losing their political autonomy. All resented French interference. Mary of Guise was French. Remember that Mary, Queen of Scots, has this French connection.

In 1559, the Lords of the Congregation rebelled against the two Marys. They abolished papal jurisdiction and the mass, and they began a process of establishing a Presbyterian Church in Scotland. The French, thinking that they'd lose Scotland from their column, sent troops. At this point, the rebels appealed to Elizabeth.

Elizabeth hesitated, her Privy Council torn between two sets of disadvantages. To support the rebels would be to support rebellion against a legitimate and



divinely sanctioned fellow monarch. This would violate the Great Chain of Being. It would signal Elizabeth's Protestant sympathies to the pope and the Catholic powers. If I'm supporting Protestant rebels, I can't very well claim that I'm neutral in this Protestant-Catholic thing. Finally, if Elizabeth failed, the French and the Scots might very well invade.

To fail to support the Protestant rebels presented its own set of difficulties. It would leave a strong Catholic Scotland on England's northern border. It would infuriate the Puritans. Finally, remember that so long as Elizabeth had no heir of her body, the heir of her blood is Mary, Queen of Scots, because Mary is descended from the Tudor Princess Margaret, who'd married James IV.

In fact, as a Catholic, Mary didn't even regard Elizabeth as the legitimate Queen of England. Provocatively, she dined on dinner plates with the English royal crest—just a little detail designed to drive her cousin crazy. Her claim to be the real Queen of England had dire consequences for all these scenarios, but it eventually convinced Elizabeth of one thing: Whatever I do, I've got to weaken Mary, Queen of Scots.

Elizabeth decided to support the Protestant rebels—sending troops, ships, and money. In June 1560, Mary of Guise died, which weakened the Catholic side. In July, all parties signed the Treaty of Edinburgh. Mary would recognize Elizabeth's title to the English throne (note that Elizabeth said nothing about Mary's right of succession in England). Scotland would embrace religious toleration. The treaty established joint rule, but effective rule was in the hands of Protestants, namely Mary, Queen of Scots' half-brother, James Stewart, Earl of Moray.

It should be obvious from this treaty that Scotland would remain difficult to rule and filled with warring clans. It was torn between the Catholic highlands and the Presbyterian lowlands. Mary, now fully back from France and now fully Queen of Scots, would have to try to please both sides.

What sort of woman inherited this situation? Hollywood and historical romance have done their best to make Mary, Queen of Scots, a sort of Catholic counterpart to Elizabeth I, for she, too, was ambitious, intelligent,

and beautiful. But where Elizabeth was cautious, Mary was impulsive. Where Elizabeth was shrewd, Mary was duplicitous. Where Elizabeth never put herself in the power of any man, Mary repeatedly married men who were unworthy of her.

In 1565, she married Henry Stewart, Lord Darnley. His chief recommendation was that he too bore Tudor blood and this strengthened Mary's claim to the English throne. He proved to be vain, self-centered, and cruel. In 1566, just one year after their marriage, he accused the queen of having an affair with her secretary, David Rizzio.

In March of that year, he led a contingent of Protestant noblemen who stormed the queen's chambers at Holyrood Palace, dragged Rizzio into the courtyard, and murdered him—virtually before the queen's very eyes. Whether Rizzio and Mary were innocent or guilty, can we agree that this is no way for the Scottish royal house to behave?

The soap opera of Mary's reign turned even more bizarre the following year. A Scottish nobleman, James Hepburn, Earl of Bothwell, having apparently won Mary's favor, engineered Darnley's murder, which took place via means of explosion on 9 February 1667. He then kidnapped the queen on 21 April. It was widely suspected that Mary actually had Bothwell kill Darnley. Letters were found—the famous casket letters. Historians have argued about their authenticity ever since.

What Mary did next surely didn't help her case. On 15 May, just weeks after the murder of her husband and her kidnapping, she married Bothwell, her kidnapper and his murderer. At this point, the Scottish nobility has had enough. They conclude that Mary is at best mad, at worst a murderess. They depose her in favor of her infant son by Lord Darnley, who becomes, at the tender age of less than a year old, King James VI of Scotland, who rules in Scotland until 1625.

Mary and Bothwell met the rebel forces at Carberry Hill near Edinburgh on 15 June in an attempt to take back the Crown. While the two sides parlay, her army deserts her. This forces Mary to abdicate—to recognize her son—in the summer of that year.

A year later, Mary and Bothwell attempt a restoration, but their forces are defeated at the battle of Langside on 13 May 1568. Mary is forced to flee somewhere. She heads south and begs to be taken in by her cousin, Elizabeth. Once again, her request from Scotland poses a dilemma: If Elizabeth grants Mary's request, she's harboring the next heir to the throne and a Catholic heir in her own kingdom. Elizabeth well remembers the destabilizing influence that she had on Mary I's reign.

If she refuses, she's abandoning her own cousin, a legitimate monarch, and the Great Chain of Being. Elizabeth grants Mary's request.

Given Mary's impulsive nature and claim to the throne, there's every reason to believe that she will be tempted to plot against Elizabeth. Given Mary's Catholicism, those plots are likely to receive the support of the pope, France, and Spain—none of whom is taken in by the queen's tightrope act. As we will see in the next lecture, the next 20 years would see the threat from Mary, Queen of Scots, build and build.

In the end, one of these two women would have to go.

# Set in a Dangerous World: 1568–88

## Lecture 18

**“I know I have the body but of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king, and of a King of England too, and think foul scorn that Parma or Spain or any prince of Europe should dare to invade the borders of my realm.”—Elizabeth I**

**G**iven England’s relative weakness, it was crucial to maintain good relations with its neighbors. England’s oldest and most proximate enemy, Scotland, was safely in the hands of a pro-English Protestant government. England’s other traditional enemy, France, was just entering a period of weakness and instability, wracked by the Wars of Religion. Under the leadership of Philip II, Spain was, on the other hand, the most powerful state on earth. It controlled most of southern Italy, the Netherlands, all of Central America, and much of South America. This empire provided the wealth for the greatest army and navy in Europe, but it also made Spain a target for English ambitions.

England and Spain were longstanding allies. Philip II wanted to maintain this alliance to protect his northern flank in the Netherlands. Elizabeth needed Spain’s friendship. But, in 1568, two areas of tension arose between England and Spain. English seafarers, including Sir John Hawkins and Sir Francis Drake, began to plunder Spanish trade by hijacking treasure fleets, raiding Central and South American ports, and so on.

The Protestant Dutch under William the Silent, fearing the imposition of the Spanish Inquisition, rebelled against Spanish rule. The English privateers and the Dutch rebels asked for Elizabeth’s support. Once again, she faced a dilemma. If she supported her privateers and the Dutch rebels, she risked war with Spain. If she abandoned them, she would lose a valuable source of revenue (she always took a cut) and leave fellow Protestants to their fate. Typically, Elizabeth chose to denounce her privateers and the Dutch rebels in public, while encouraging them with money and shelter in private. Philip II was not fooled. In response, he began to wage a secret war of his own,

exploiting the existence of Mary, Queen of Scots, and the Catholic minority in England.

By the 1560s, Roman Catholicism was dying out in England. The Catholic Church sought to remedy this by sending missionary priests, mostly Jesuits. Theoretically, their mission was not to convert Protestants or destabilize the Elizabethan regime, but to minister to the shrinking Catholic community, mostly in the North. But most missionary priests stayed hidden with wealthy aristocratic families in the South. Inevitably, some became involved in political plots. Beginning in 1568, Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk, the wealthiest peer in England and a secret Catholic, hatched a plot to wed the soon-to-be divorced Mary, Queen of Scots; purge Cecil from the Privy Council; and dictate terms to Elizabeth. He lost his nerve when the plot was discovered by Walsingham's spies. However, in 1569, two northern peers, Thomas Percy, Earl of Northumberland, and Charles Neville, Earl of Westmorland, raised their tenants and marched south. Few southern Catholics joined them, and the Northern Rebellion petered out. Eventually, Westmorland fled, but Northumberland and 450 followers were executed.



**Mary, Queen of Scots, signed an agreement to assassinate Elizabeth, in essence signing her own death warrant.**

In 1570, the pope finally excommunicated Elizabeth. An Italian diplomat named Robert Ridolfi got his backing, and that of Philip II, Mary, and Norfolk, for another plot. The Ridolfi plot, too, was discovered, and Norfolk was executed. These events led to a change in policy. Parliament, with the queen's reluctant consent, began to pass laws against recusancy, that is, Catholicism. In 1571, the Henrician Treason statute was revived and expanded to include reception of papal documents. In 1581, the fine for absence from church was raised to £20, a crippling sum for ordinary people.

In 1585, it became treason to be a Catholic priest in England. This legislation resulted in the execution of nearly 200 Catholics (mostly clergy) and further decline in their numbers. Elizabeth and her Privy Council realized that war with Spain was probably inevitable, but not yet.

Throughout the 1570s, the Leicester faction urged war, but Burghley and his followers reminded Elizabeth that England was not ready. The queen bought time in two ways. She toned down her support of English privateers and Dutch rebels. She tempted the Catholic powers with the possibility of a peaceful conquest through diplomatic marriage. This worked for a while, enabling Hawkins and Drake to strengthen the Royal Navy. However, in 1584, William the Silent was murdered, threatening the Dutch revolt with collapse.

In 1585, Elizabeth made a choice, sending 7,000 troops to the Netherlands under her beloved Leicester. This meant war. In response, Philip II began to prepare a vast Armada with which to invade England. The English sought to delay the invasion by successfully attacking the fleet in port. With the Spanish fleet preparing to ferry the Spanish army across the Channel, it was imperative to do something about Mary.

Elizabeth was reluctant to harm her cousin and a fellow monarch, but Mary had given her cause. In mid-1586, Secretary Walsingham learned of another

plot to put Mary on the throne, this one organized by Anthony Babington, one of her household servants. This time, Mary signed a letter agreeing to Elizabeth's assassination. On the evidence of the Babington plot, Mary was tried and convicted of treason by autumn. At this point, Elizabeth hesitated. She signed the death warrant, but instructed Secretary of State Davison not to use it. Davison, backed by his fellow privy councilors, implemented the warrant anyway. Mary, Queen of Scots, was executed at Fotheringhay Castle on 8 February 1587. When she heard, Elizabeth was furious.

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**Mary, Queen of Scots, was executed at Fotheringhay Castle on 8 February 1587. ... Philip II now added righteous vengeance to his list of reasons to invade Elizabeth's realm.**

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Philip II now added righteous vengeance to his list of reasons to invade Elizabeth's realm. In the summer of 1588, the Spanish Armada, the largest oceangoing navy yet assembled, sailed for England. The English assumed that the point of the Armada was to conquer England for Spain and Catholicism. In fact, Philip would have been content with English withdrawal from the Netherlands and a toleration for Catholics. The opposing forces appeared to be mismatched. The Armada consisted of 130 ships, manned by 7,000–8,000 sailors and carrying 17,000–19,000 soldiers. Opposing them were about 50 warships of the Royal Navy, which were faster and better gunned than the Spanish, and the English militia, made up of common farmers. The Spanish plan was to sail up the English Channel, rendezvous with another 17,000 crack troops waiting in the Netherlands, then ferry these forces across the Channel to England.

Unfortunately, the Armada was slow and poorly gunned, having few heavy cannon. This meant that, if intercepted by the Royal Navy, it could neither sink the English ships nor close and board them unless the English cooperated. Instead, when the Armada was sighted in late July, the English ships stood at long range and pounded it, but the latter held formation. When the Armada pulled into Calais, the English sent in fireships, causing the Spanish to flee in chaos. This allowed English gunfire to pick them off one by one. When the Spanish attempted to return to Spain by sailing north around Scotland and down the west coast of Ireland, they were battered by storms. About half reached port safely.

The defeat of the Armada was a tremendous propaganda victory and confidence-booster for England. It was perceived by many as another sign that England was a “chosen nation.” But it did not seriously weaken Spain. This was only the beginning of the war. ■

### Suggested Reading

Bucholz and Key, *Early Modern England*, chap. 4, secs. 8–10; chap. 5, secs 1–2.

Guy, *Tudor England*, chap. 12.

Mattingly, *The Armada*.

## Questions to Consider

1. Why did Elizabeth support the English privateers and Dutch rebels at the risk of war with Spain? Why did Philip II delay fighting that war for so long?
2. Why did Elizabeth hesitate to do something about Mary, Queen of Scots? How do you interpret her behavior both before and after the execution?



## Set in a Dangerous World: 1568–88

### Lecture 18—Transcript

In the last lecture, we noted how Elizabeth's compromise over religion was designed in part to placate the Catholic powers, always a concern for a Tudor prince. In this lecture, we find out why.

As the first decade of Elizabeth's reign came to a close, France grew weak because of its own bloody internal religious strife. Spain remained both the greatest military power in the world and a source of tension for England, first because of the trade and privateering voyages of men like Drake and Hawkins, and second because of the Protestant revolt in the Netherlands. Philip II would respond to Elizabeth's support for these activities with a series of Catholic plots of his own to depose Elizabeth and place Mary, Queen of Scots, on the English throne.

Elizabeth nevertheless managed to postpone war and bought time to build up her forces by engaging in her famous marriage negotiations while her Privy Council argued about war and the fate of Mary. Those issues were finally resolved with Mary's execution in 1587 and the sailing of the Spanish Armada in 1588.

During the 1560s, England remained at best a second-rate military power backed by an impoverished government. Given England's relative weakness, it was crucial to maintain good relations with its neighbors, particularly its bigger, more powerful ones. In fact, by the end of the 1560s, the queen's careful diplomatic tightrope act seemed to be working. After the deposition of Mary, Queen of Scots, Scotland, for example, was in the hands of a safely pro-English Protestant government. England's oldest and most proximate enemy is taken care of.

England's other traditional enemy was just entering a period of weakness and instability. During this period, France was ruled by the sickly boy-kings of the Valois line. You'll remember Francis II dying young in the previous lecture. That line culminated in the reign of Henry III, who reigned in France from 1574–1589. Real power, however, lay with his mother, Catherine de Medici.

As it became clear that the Valois were reaching the end of their line, two families arose to challenge for supreme power in France. On the one hand, there was the Guise family, who led the Catholic League. They sought the throne and the elimination of Protestantism. On the other hand, the Bourbon family led French Protestants called Huguenots. They fought for the throne and for toleration.

On 24 August 1572, Catherine decided to show her sympathies by organizing the massacre of leading Protestants in the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre of that day. That slaughter—that massacre—had two profound effects upon English history. Number one, it was yet another line item in the list of Catholic misdeeds and cruelty that convinced the English that they didn't want to be Catholics. Number two, the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre plunged France into years of religious warfare. The Wars of Religion would leave France far too weak to attack England. Here's another enemy neutralized.

Spain was a very different matter. Thanks to the ruthless boldness of the Conquistadors and the leadership of Philip II, Spain was, on the other hand, the most powerful state on earth. It controlled most of southern Italy, the Netherlands, all of Central America, and much of South America. This empire provided the wealth for the greatest army and navy in Europe.

England and Spain had a longstanding friendship that went back to Henry VII and that had even survived Henry VIII's repudiation of Catherine of Aragon. Philip II wanted to maintain this relationship, because friendship with England helped protect his northern flank in the Netherlands. I should point out that as France grew weaker, that protection of the northern flank grew less important.

Elizabeth wanted to maintain the friendship because England needed all the powerful friends it could get, and she was in no position to fight a war.

In 1568, two areas of tension arose between England and Spain. First, English merchants wanted a piece of Spanish and American trade. In those days, empires were closed economic systems. The Spanish empire was no different. It guarded its trade jealously. English traders saw an opportunity

to break into Spain's monopoly by supplying African slaves to the Spanish silver mines and plantations of the New World, the Spanish having virtually liquidated the Native American population.

In 1568, a "peaceful" English slaving fleet, commanded by Sir John Hawkins and secretly authorized by the virgin queen, was attacked by the Spanish navy at San Juan de Ulua in the Caribbean. Only two English ships escaped: Hawkins and another one commanded by a young mariner by the name of Francis Drake. Letting Hawkins and Drake escape was a huge mistake. These men would come back to haunt Spain again and again. Drake in particular would harbor a deep intense hatred of the Spanish.

English hatred of the Spanish was magnified by stories of Spanish cruelty to captured English Protestant sailors, who were sentenced by the Inquisition to work Philip II's galleys in his Mediterranean fleet. Of course, the irony is completely lost on the English that this is just deserts for the treatment that they had meted out to the African slaves.

History changes with the times. Historians used to portray Drake, Hawkins, and these voyages as being sort of brave enterprises, fighting for gutty little England—why they were practically freedom fighters! When you look at it from the African point of view, these people are barbarians and war criminals. If you look at it from the Spanish point of view, they're terrorists.

Elizabeth reacted to the episode of 1568 just the way the head of a state that sponsors terrorism would: She professed her complete innocence to Philip. She was doing everything she could to restrain Drake, Hawkins, and people like that. Of course, she turned a blind eye to their piracy and occasionally benefited from the wealth that they were able to bring back, as did other courtiers like Leicester and Walsingham.

In 1572, Drake mounted a daring raid on the Isthmus of Panama, which netted £20,000. In 1577–1580, he grew bolder. He sailed his ship, the *Golden Hinde*, across the south Atlantic to the east coast of South America, through the Straits of Magellan, up the west coast of America as far north as California, across the Pacific, around the Cape of Good Hope, and back to England, plundering Spanish shipping all along the way and reading to his

crew from John Foxe's *The Book of Martyrs* just so that they would know why it was Spanish shipping they were plundering.

Thus, he and his crew became only the second to circumnavigate the globe after Magellan. Drake had the further achievement of actually surviving the voyage. Famously, upon arriving at Plymouth, he leans down over the top rail of the *Golden Hinde* and asks, "Does the queen still live—and I mean Elizabeth?" Of course, if she did not—if Mary, Queen of Scots, sat on the throne—then Drake is a traitor. Since Elizabeth did still live, he's a hero. Elizabeth actually went down and knighted Drake on the deck of the *Golden Hinde*. Well she might, because he handed over to her more than 264,000 badly needed pounds of loot.

All along, Elizabeth is assuring Philip that she, "Has no idea! This man Drake is just unstoppable." She is doing everything she can. He knows better, but he decides that in the interest of peace, he can absorb English pinpricks at sea. It's the second area of conflict between England and Spain that would prove much more serious. I mean the Netherlands.

Philip II had been given the Netherlands by his father, Charles V, in 1554, before he became King of Spain. Unfortunately for the arch-Catholic Philip, much of the Netherlands had actually embraced Calvinist Protestantism by that time. In 1566, a group of Dutch and Flemish noblemen led by William, Prince of Orange (he was also known as William the Silent) formed a league to oppose increasing Spanish influence and the rumored imposition of the Spanish Inquisition.

In 1567, Philip does just this. He imposes the dreaded Spanish Inquisition, and he sends 20,000 troops under Fernando Alvarez de Toledo, Duke of Alba, to back the Inquisition up. Instead of religious uniformity, these measures incite a revolt against Spanish rule that will drag on into the 17<sup>th</sup> century. It will drag on for decades. The rebels appeal to Elizabeth as a fellow Protestant for help. Once again, Protestant rebels are appealing to the only Protestant queen for miles or even continents.

Once again, she has a problem. If she supports the Dutch insurgence, she risks disrupting English trade to the Netherlands, which is crucial.

Remember that Antwerp is the key *entrepôt*. By the Netherlands, I mean a broader geographical area that we might mean by the Netherlands today because it includes what is today Belgium. She runs the risk of disrupting English trade and war with Spain. She'd also be breaking the Great Chain of Being, because these people are rebelling against a divinely appointed monarch.

If she abandons the rebels, she'll be leaving fellow Protestants to their fate, and she'll be the only major Protestant state west of the Rhine. She will also leave a strengthened Spain on her southeastern flank.

Toward the end of 1568, Elizabeth is forced into a decision when a Spanish fleet carrying £85,000 worth of gold bullion for Alba takes shelter from Channel storms in English ports. This is a very odd diplomatic episode. The Spanish immediately assume that Elizabeth is going to seize the gold, so they do the aggressive thing: They close the port of Antwerp, seize English goods, and expel English merchants. This gives Elizabeth an excuse. She seizes the gold. After all, this happens in the same year as the event with Hawkins and his "peaceful" slaving fleet. It all combines to add to the tension of 1568.

It should be obvious that conflicting interests and rising levels of distrust, exacerbated by religious difference, were driving a wedge between these two old friends. From hence forward, the queen would open English ports not only to English privateers, but also to Dutch privateers, who were known as the "sea beggars." She supplied the rebels with money, of course all the while protesting her innocence and condemning both the Dutch revolt and her own privateers in public.

Philip was no fool. He didn't want war, but events seemed to be moving in that direction. The presence of a Catholic minority in England, not unlike that Protestant enclave in the Netherlands, and of a Catholic alternative—Mary, Queen of Scots, in England—gives him an opportunity. Philip begins to wage a secret war of his own. At the heart of that secret war will be the revival of Roman Catholicism.

By the late 1560s, Roman Catholicism in England was dying out. The Counter-Reformation Church sought to remedy this by founding English

seminaries at Douai in France and also in Rome. They sent missionary priests, mostly from the newly founded order of Jesuits to England. Theoretically, and contrary to popular belief, the official mission of these missionary priests was to sustain the small English Catholic community in their faith. It was not to reconvert Protestants. It was certainly not to change who sat on the throne of England.

In fact, something very odd happened as soon as the missionaries got off the boat. Most English Catholics were humble farmers who lived in the North of England. The missionaries didn't want to go there for some reason. They liked staying in the South, where there were nice country-house Catholics who might be able to hide them and who had real power. It's possible that they liked the South because the food was better in the country houses, but I think the argument was, "If we are ever going to reconvert this country, we're going to have to start with the people who matter." That's always been a sort of theme of Jesuit history. You want to proselytize among the leaders of society, hence Jesuit education.

The missionaries stayed in the South, not among the most populous groups of Catholics, but amongst the most powerful. It was probably inevitable given their existence; the queen's apparent sympathy for Protestantism; the presence of Mary, Queen of Scots, in England; and Spain's military power and sense of grievance, that some Catholics, including eventually the pope, would call for a holy crusade against England.

Beginning in 1568, Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk, the wealthiest peer in England and a secret Catholic, hatches a plot. He plans to wed Mary, Queen of Scots. You're doing your best to keep up with Mary's various marriages. I should inform you that her husband, the Earl of Bothwell, is at this moment languishing in a Danish prison and the pope is working on a divorce for her, which will free her up to marry the Duke of Norfolk or anyone else who might prove useful.

The plan was to marry Mary, then purge Cecil and the other Protestants from the Privy Council, and so dictate terms to Elizabeth. The scheme received support from disgruntled northern peers, men like Thomas Percy, Earl of Northumberland, and Charles Neville, Earl of Westmorland. Are those

names a little familiar? If you were an Earl of Northumberland, a Neville, or a Percy 100 or 200 years earlier, you were quite a big deal. Remember that the Tudors have been reducing their power. These men are angry and they're Catholic. Oddly enough, this plan also received support from Dudley. The Earl of Leicester wants to use it to break Cecil's hold on power.

At the crucial moment, late in 1569, Norfolk loses his nerve, and the plot is discovered by Walsingham's spies. At this point, the queen summons Northumberland and Westmorland to court to explain themselves, and they decide that they have nothing to lose. They've passed the point of no return. They raise 450 men under the banner of the Five Wounds of Christ. Remember the Pilgrimage of Grace? They begin to march south.

They enter Durham Cathedral on 14 November, and in a display of riotous Catholicism, they rip the English Bible to shreds and celebrate a mass before large crowds. As they head further south, their support begins to disintegrate. It's the South that's Protestant, and there's very few Catholic peers in the South. They want a quiet life. They don't want any part of this. Perhaps out of fear or inertia, loyalty to the queen, or maybe because nobody's giving a direction from Rome, the rebellion peters out.

Westmorland and Northumberland both flee to Scotland. Westmorland makes his way to Europe. Northumberland was actually handed over to Elizabeth. He and some 450 followers were executed. This was the last popular Catholic rebellion in English history. It put an end to Tudor reliance on great peers to run the North. The Percys and the Nevilles become far less powerful from here on in.

On the Catholic side, it convinced Rome that it needed to send a signal. In 1570, Pope Pius V finally excommunicates Elizabeth via the bull, *Regnans in Excelsis*. In this papal document, he calls upon Catholics to overthrow the heretic queen. This was in fact a terrible blunder, for it puts Catholics in the awful position of having to choose between their faith and their queen. Most, even priests, tacitly chose the queen by refusing to take up arms against her. As a result, the initiative for rebellion—for deposing Elizabeth—is going to have to come from abroad.

In 1571, an Italian diplomat named Robert Ridolfi gets the backing of the pope, Philip II, Mary, and Norfolk for yet another plot. In the end, the plot doesn't work because the Spanish won't invade until they see English Catholics rise up. The English Catholics don't want to rise up, at least not until they see Spanish troops. Nothing happens, except that the Ridolfi plot is discovered by Walsingham. Norfolk is executed as too dangerous to be allowed to live.

These events had no effect on who wore the crown in England, but they were still significant in two ways. First, Parliament, with the queen's reluctant consent, began to pass laws against recusancy—laws against Catholicism. In 1571, the Henrician Treason statute is revived, making it a capital crime to call the queen schismatic or heretic; question her title to the throne; promote in speech, writing, or deed her removal or death; or (and this was new) to receive papal documents. This was further elaborated on and made stricter in 1585.

In 1581, the fine for recusancy (that word means “to be absent from Church without leave”) was raised to £20. This was a crippling sum for ordinary people. It was probably meant to attack those country-house Catholics, whom the Jesuits so favored. In 1585, it became treason to be a Catholic priest in England, or to convert anyone from their allegiance to the Church of England or to be so converted.

This legislation resulted in the execution of nearly 200 Catholics, two-thirds of them clergy. It drove the Catholic missionary movement, and indeed the Catholic religion, further underground. As a result, by 1603, there were only about 35,000 Catholics left in England.

I told you that these plots had two significances. The second one was that it convinced Elizabeth and most members of her Privy Council that war with Spain was probably inevitable, but not yet—at least not yet for some of them. It's true that the Leicester-Walsingham group is urging the queen to support the Protestant rebels in the Netherlands more actively and to go after the King of Spain. Cecil (after 1572, Lord Treasurer and Lord Burghley) keeps reminding her, “Remember, you have no money. Your navy is in disrepair. You need to, at the very least, buy time to get ready to fight Spain.”



Elizabeth pursues a two-prong strategy in the 1570s. First, there's strategic withdrawal from the Protestant rebels and the trading voyages. She tends not to be as supportive as she had been before, particularly for the Protestant rebels. Second, she begins to engage in her famous marriage negotiation. The idea here is that, "If I can hold out to the Catholic powers that they can win England through love, they won't attack and I'll buy time."

There's a series of French princes and European aristocrats that process through the court trying to win Elizabeth's hand. One almost has an image of a sort of waiting room where these people are called in by number. The most serious of these courtships involved Francois, Duke of Alencon, and Anjou, the brother to the King of France, who visited in 1579 and also 1581–1582. For awhile, it looked like Elizabeth might cave. There's some evidence that she actually really liked Anjou. She used to call him her "frog," which I suppose coming from Elizabeth is a huge compliment.

In the end, interestingly enough, her Privy Council, which has all along been urging her to marry, said, "No, no, don't marry him." Probably Elizabeth's last opportunity to marry went away. Nevertheless, her strategy worked. She bought time. During that time, under the leadership of Lord Howard of Effingham and Francis Drake and John Hawkins, the navy was built up.

In 1584, Elizabeth's time ran out. In that year, William the Silent was murdered by a Catholic assassin, threatening the Dutch revolt with collapse. Without a leader, town after town began to fall to the crack Spanish army, now under the leadership of Alexander de Farnese, Duke of Parma. It was now or never.

Elizabeth decided to send 7,000 troops under her beloved Leicester to the Netherlands. They arrived in 1585. This meant war. In response, Philip II began to prepare a vast Armada with which to invade England. The English tried to delay matters even further. In 1585, Drake captured and burned the Spanish port of Vigo. In 1587, he attacked the Armada at its base at Cadiz and destroyed 30 ships. This was highly embarrassing to Philip II. The famous phrase was that Drake had "singed the King of Spain's beard." It took him a year to build up the number of ships again, but what this really

hurt was Philip's ability to get loans to support the Armada. This hurt his European prestige.

In the meantime, with the Spanish fleet preparing to ferry the Spanish army across the Channel, it was imperative to do something about Mary. Elizabeth was reluctant to harm her cousin and a fellow monarch, despite the fact that Mary had given her plenty of cause.

In mid-1586, Secretary Walsingham learned of yet another plot to put Mary on the throne. This was organized by one of her servants, Anthony Babington. As with previous plots, the Roman Catholics were going to rise, and the Spanish army was going to appear on the English coast, but this time there was a new twist: Elizabeth was to be assassinated.

What Walsingham didn't know was whether Mary would approve of the assassination. He let the letters pass, reading every single one. Then it came: the letter signed by Mary saying, "Kill her." They had Mary dead to rights. With the incriminating letter in hand, the Privy Council actually got Elizabeth to agree to a trial, which in the autumn of 1586 agreed that Mary, Queen of Scots, was guilty of compassing the death of the queen.

At this point, even with unequivocal proof of Mary's intentions, Elizabeth hesitated. The result is one of the most remarkable incidents in English history. After weeks of hectoring by her Privy Council, the English queen finally signs the death warrant, but then she hands it to Secretary of State Davidson and says, "Don't use this."

Davidson has the object so long desired. He goes to the Privy Council: "What do I do?" They say, "We'll back you up—send the warrant." He sends it up to Fotheringay Castle, where Mary, Queen of Scots, is being held prisoner. Within hours, she's beheaded, on 8 February 1587.

When Elizabeth hears, she's furious. She gives Mary a full state funeral. She apologizes to every diplomat she can get her hands on. She fires Davison and locks him in the Tower—but she releases him a few years later, and she continues to pay his salary for the rest of his life.

What went on here? Was Elizabeth's anger real, or an act to placate Catholic opinion at home and abroad? What did she mean by signing the death warrant and then giving instruction that it not be used? Was this a Machiavellian manipulation of her advisors? The desperate waffling of a perennially hesitant mind? The tortured maneuvers of a soul torn between head and heart, necessity and mercy?

We'll never know. What we do know is Philip II now had one more excuse to attack England. Nothing could prevent the Armada sailing now. In the spring of 1588, the Spanish Armada, the largest ocean going navy ever assembled up to this point, left Cadiz bound for England. The English assumed that the point of the Armada was to conquer England and reconvert it for Catholicism. In fact, Philip would have been content with English withdrawal from the Netherlands and a toleration for Catholics. From an English point of view, the Catholics are always as sinister as can possibly be imagined and that wasn't always true from the other point of view.

The Armada was commanded by Alonzo Perez de Guzman, Duke of Medina Sedonia, a man who'd never been to sea before. It consisted of 130 ships manned by 7,000 sailors and carrying 17,000 soldiers. Opposing them were about 50 warships of the Royal Navy, which were faster and better gunned than the Spanish. If the Spanish troops landed, they'd be opposed by the English militia, made up of common farmers.

In her finest hour, Elizabeth went down to Tilbury, Essex to rally this ragtag assemblage of yokels. She gave the following speech:

My loving people, we have been persuaded by some that are careful of our safety to take heed how we commit ourselves to armed multitudes for fear of treachery. Let tyrants fear. I have always so behaved myself that under God I have placed my chiefest strength and safeguard in the loyal hearts and good will of my subjects. I know I have the body but of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king, and of a King of England too, and think foul scorn that Parma or Spain or any prince of Europe should dare to invade the borders of my realm, to which rather than any dishonor shall grow by me, I myself will take up arms. I myself will

be your general, judge, and rewarder of every one of your virtues in the field.

Still and all, England's best hope lay with the Royal Navy. The Spanish plan was to sail up the English Channel, rendezvous with another 17,000 troops waiting in the Netherlands, and then ferry all these forces across the Channel to England. This would take time because the fleet was slowed to the speed of the slowest transport, about 10 miles an hour. The Armada was also poorly gunned. It had few heavy cannon. Therefore, if intercepted by the Royal Navy, it couldn't actually sink the English ships. The Armada's plan was to close with the Royal Navy and board them—use the troops and the military superiority to take over the English ships.

Since the English ships were faster, the English would actually have had to cooperate with this plan. This maybe brings me to a fundamental difference between the English and the Spanish here. The Spanish knew they had problems. They knew their cannonballs didn't fit right in their cannons. They knew that Medina Sedonia hadn't been to sea before, but Philip II believed that God would protect the Spanish Armada. This was a holy crusade. How could it fail? It was sailing under a papal banner. All the Spanish ships are named after saints.

The English are Protestants, and I have to be careful not to paint them as being overly reliant on themselves, but all the English ships had names like *Triumph*, *Revenge*, *Ark Royal*, and *Victory*. These are names that would resonate through the history of the Royal Navy. I think the basic point here is that God helps those who help themselves. The English plan was just to sink the Armada in the Channel. The Armada was sighted on 19 July 1588. Apparently, Drake and Hawkins were supposedly playing at bowls and Drake said, "We have time to finish the game before we go down and finish the Spanish." The English ships stood at long range, about 300 yards, and pounded the Armada, but the latter held formation.

By the way, the battle actually began when the English commander, Lord Howard of Effingham, sent a challenge via a little boat—a "pinnace"—which sailed up to a Spanish flagged ship. The pinnace's name was *Disdain*.

When the Armada pulled into Calais on 27 July it was still in good shape, but the English sent in fireships. These are ships packed with combustibles, which once they got amongst the Spanish ships caused the Spanish to panic and flee. This allowed the English to pick them off one by one as they exited Calais. At this point, the invasion was over. When the Spanish attempted to return to Spain by sailing north around Scotland and down the west coast of Ireland, they were battered by fierce storms, some of the worst in a generation. The English would later call this “the Protestant wind.”

About half of the Armada reached port safely.

The defeat of the Armada was a tremendous propaganda victory and confidence booster for England. It was perceived by many as yet another sign that the English were a “chosen nation.” You need to understand that despite the loss of thousands of men and about 60 ships, the loss of the Armada did not seriously weaken Spain. This was only the beginning of the war.

In this lecture, Elizabeth and her advisors put off the day of reckoning with Spain for as long as possible. As we shall see in the next lecture, that day was only a dawn. The ensuing world war fought on both sides of the Atlantic would test the Tudor state to its limits.

# Heart and Stomach of a Queen: 1588–1603

## Lecture 19

When she speaks, it must have seemed to those who were listening, kneeling, as if a goddess, at once familiar and yet from another world and time, had opened her mouth. ... Can there have been a dry eye in this house as the dear old queen, probably addressing Parliament for the last time, reminds them of the dangers that they had faced together? Reminds them of the love that she bore for them rather than share it with any man? Do you think anybody noticed that she's just dismissed Parliament?

**T**he war against Spain was, arguably, the first world war, fought on both sides of the Atlantic. The queen and her Privy Council were torn between two strategies, corresponding to the two theaters of war. One group in Council, led by Robert Devereaux, Earl of Essex, and supported by adventurers, such as Drake and Sir Walter Raleigh, wanted to concentrate on the naval war, raid Spanish shipping, and plunder Spanish towns. Expeditions in 1589 and 1595–1597 suffered heavy losses in return for little real strategic significance. Lord Burghley, his son Robert Cecil, and their followers wanted to concentrate on the land war.

The queen continued to support the Dutch rebels, who under Maurice of Nassau, finally began to repel the Spanish in the 1590s. In 1589, the queen also sent English troops to France to assist Henry of Bourbon, who, as Henry IV, was fighting against the Catholic League, backed by Philip II, for the throne of France. Henry's forces triumphed by 1598. But the most important theater for England was Ireland.

The history of Ireland under the Tudors had been anything but happy. From the 1540s, the English government began to confiscate the lands of disaffected Gaelic and "Old English" (that is, English Catholic) nobles and establish plantations of Protestant English (later Scottish) landlords, called "New English." This, combined with the English government's attempt to impose Protestantism, produced resentment and occasional isolated rebellions into the 1590s. These rebellions were suppressed with increasing

savagery, including massacres of defeated men, women, and children; the burning of crops; and other atrocities.

In 1594, Hugh O'Neill, Earl of Tyrone, the leading Gaelic chieftain in Ulster, rebelled and sought Spanish help. The Spanish mounted Armadas in 1596, 1597, 1599, and 1601, but only the last managed to land troops. In 1599, the queen dispatched about 17,000 troops under the Earl of Essex. He proved ineffective, abandoning his command to return to London in order to justify his conduct. Essex's replacement, Charles Blount, Lord Mountjoy, routed the Irish and Spanish forces at Kinsale at Christmas 1601. Tyrone submitted in March 1603.

In 1607, Tyrone and other Catholic aristocrats fled to Europe, leaving their tenants to face the consequences. In 1608, the Crown began to confiscate most of Ulster, establishing a Scots-Presbyterian plantation. Gaelic Irish and Old English were evicted from their homes and forced to the barren West of Ireland. The remainder became tenants. By 1640, Protestants owned 35 percent of the land in Ireland. The displaced Catholic Irish population continued to nurse bitter resentment toward the English Crown and their Protestant landlords.

The world war with Spain stretched the capabilities of the Tudor state to their limit. The need to build and maintain the Royal Navy, raise and supply vast armies, and subsidize English allies at great distances necessitated huge sums of money. Wartime expenditure was about £240,000 a year. This was in addition to the Crown's regular peacetime expenditure of about £100,000, still necessary to keep things running at home. In response, Lord Treasurer Burghley stretched the revenue to about £300,000 a year by employing extreme frugality; exploiting feudal dues, old laws, and taxes; and selling off £100,000 in Crown lands. Each of these measures diminished either the queen's popularity or her long-term financial prospects; nor did they fully pay for the war.

To make up the shortfall, Elizabeth was forced to call Parliaments seven times between 1585 and 1601. This had two effects:

- Parliament voted over £1 million in taxes during this period. This enabled the queen to pay for the war, leaving a total government debt of just over £365,000 at her death.
- Parliament gained experience, confidence, and a sense of corporate identity. It spent most of its time passing local legislation. But it also used its right to petition for redress of grievances to raise issues the queen found uncomfortable, such as her marriage prospects (early in the reign) and the succession (later, when it became clear that she would not marry); religious reform; and war and foreign policy.

Consequently, Elizabeth did not much like Parliaments. In her view, Parliament was infringing on affairs of state reserved to her prerogative. Her response was to imprison outspoken M.P.s, such as Peter Wentworth, and use her powers of veto or, if possible, honeyed persuasion. An example occurred in 1601, when Parliament met in an angry mood.

**Elizabeth did not much like Parliaments. In her view, Parliament was infringing on affairs of state reserved to her prerogative.**

The previous decade had been a hard one in England. By 1601, the country had suffered 15 years of war and high taxes.

During the 1590s, it had also suffered bad harvests, a major agricultural depression, and famine. The wool trade was also in decline, thanks to the war. Parliament passed two new Poor Laws and attacked royal monopolies. The queen granted monopolies on individual products to her courtiers as a way to reward them without having to dip into her own revenue. A courtier who received a monopoly on, say, all the nails in England, took a cut of the profits made by nail manufacturers. The additional costs were passed onto the consumer. Thus, monopolies were, in effect, taxes not voted by Parliament.

The issue came to a head in 1601 when, responding to public demonstrations in London, Parliament threatened to outlaw the practice. Elizabeth responded by delivering the famous Golden Speech in which she told the honorable members that “there is no prince that loves his subjects better,” promising,



vaguely, to do something about monopolies, then dismissing them. Thus, she used the image of Gloriana once more to deflect attention away from cracks and tensions in the regime.

By the turn of the century, most of Elizabeth's old cronies (Burghley, Hatton, Walsingham) were dying off. There remained two great factions, fighting to control the government when the next reign began. The Cecil faction, now led by Burghley's son, Secretary of State Robert Cecil, was made up of administrators. Elizabeth trusted him, and they controlled most of the patronage and jobs at court. The Essex faction, led by Leicester's stepson, Robert Devereaux, Earl of Essex, was made up of courtiers, poets, soldiers, and adventurers. After Leicester's death in 1588, the aging Elizabeth was attracted to the dashing Essex, but she did not trust him to run her government, particularly after his humiliation in Ireland. Feeling increasingly marginalized, Essex quarreled with and nearly struck the queen at a Council meeting in July 1598, then launched a foolhardy rebellion in February 1601. This was easily suppressed, and he was executed.

By this time, it was clear that a new reign was fast approaching. While Elizabeth refused to discuss the succession, Cecil negotiated with James VI of Scotland, the logical nearest heir. When Elizabeth died on 24 March 1603, Secretary Cecil played kingmaker, proclaiming James King of England.

Perhaps the real Tudor achievement is that, unlike Henry VII, the first Stuart ascended peacefully, without any breakdown of order. Elizabeth and her predecessors had defended the country from foreign invaders, tamed the nobility, worked out a religious settlement, and forged an English and Protestant nation. But they had also oppressed the Irish, offended the Scots, raised the profile of Parliaments, and left unresolved great social and economic tensions. These tensions would haunt their successors. ■

### Suggested Reading

Bucholz and Key, *Early Modern England*, chap. 5, secs. 3–5.

Guy, *Tudor England*, chaps. 12–16.

## Questions to Consider

1. Why did men like Leicester, Essex, Drake, and Raleigh want an aggressive war with Spain? Why did Burghley and Cecil favor the Continental option?
2. Why did the war in Ireland become so savage? What factors exacerbated its violence?

# Heart and Stomach of a Queen: 1588–1603

## Lecture 19—Transcript

The last lecture explained how increasing tensions born of trade disputes, religious differences, the revolt in the Netherlands, and the fate of Mary, Queen of Scots, resulted in war with Spain and the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588. This lecture continues the story of that war, focusing not only on combat, but also on the domestic burden of the war on a country that was reeling from poor harvests and the economic depression of the 1590s.

Faced with the unprecedented cost of the war, Elizabeth called frequent Parliaments in order to raise taxes. It was also in Parliament that the country reminded her of the tremendous burdens it was carrying.

This lecture concludes with the Essex revolt, the queen's death, and the smooth succession of the Stuarts in the person of James VI of Scotland, who would become James I of England.

The defeat of the Spanish Armada was a sort of coming of age for the Tudor state. It was first of all a tremendous propaganda victory and a confidence booster for England. It provided further evidence that England really was a chosen nation fighting a Biblical struggle against the anti-Christ represented by international papal Catholicism. According to this view, God was a Protestant Englishman who had dispersed the Armada with a Protestant wind, thus Elizabeth's regime struck a commemorative medal, which read, *Flavit Deus et dissipati sunt* ("God blew and they were scattered").

For all the triumphal swagger of the Elizabethan regime following the defeat of the Armada, 1588 marks only the beginning of a very long struggle. It would outlast Philip II. It would outlast Burghley. It would outlast Elizabeth herself. Moreover, this became a world war. It would spread to three continents: Europe and the Americas. It would be fought on both sides of the Atlantic. Far more than Henry VIII's French junkets, this war would tax the Tudor state to its limits. Vast armies would have to be raised and navies outfitted, all supplied at great distances.

The end result of the war would actually be ambiguous, far less glorious than the Armada win. England would survive. Perhaps one reason for the ambiguity is that the English never really settled on war aims or strategy. The queen and her Privy Council were torn between two strategies corresponding to two theaters of war. One group in Council was led first by Leicester, and then after his death in 1588 by Leicester's stepson, Robert Devereaux, Earl of Essex. This group included privateers like Drake and adventurers like Sir Walter Raleigh. They wanted to concentrate on the naval war—on the plundering of Spanish shipping and Spanish towns. The idea was to starve Philip of treasure fleets and also incidentally enrich the privateers and the courtiers who promoted the strategy.

As early as 1589, the year after the Armada, Drake persuades the queen to take the war to Philip with a huge expedition of 140 ships and 23,000 men. This is fully comparable to the Armada itself. Their mission was to sink the remnants of the Armada, to foment rebellion in Portugal—which at this point is a Spanish possession, and to use English marines to capture a base in the Azores from which Spanish trade to the New World could be attacked. Once at sea, the adventurers changed their plans. They engaged no Spanish war ships. They sacked the Spanish port of Corona, getting thoroughly drunk in the process. From here, they sailed to Lisbon, where they botched an amphibious assault. By the time they reached the Azores, the marines were too depleted by disease and hangovers to hang on. In the end, Drake lost 11,000 soldiers and sailors and expended £100,000.

Similar adventures in 1595, 1596, and 1597 also failed to have any strategic significance. Drake and Hawkins both died on one, a nutty attempt to conquer Panama in 1595–1596.

The other strategy England pursued was that advocated in Council by Lord Burghley and his son Robert Cecil. They wanted to concentrate on the land war on the continent. Of course, you'll anticipate that they chose this one because it was the cheapest option. They felt that they would always be auxiliaries to the Dutch and later on, as we'll see, to French Protestants.

The problem here was that the English military system was no match for the Spanish army. There was in fact no professional English army. Rather, as

in 1588, the queen relied on her militia and the raising of ad hoc forces for service abroad. They raised quite a large number of men. Between 1585 and 1603, some 90,000 men were conscripted. That's 11–12 percent of the total male population of England and Wales between the ages of 16 and 39. This is a massive effort.

Once recruited, unfortunately the people that they had a tendency to conscript were landless laborers, vagrants, and criminals. Once recruited, each company was placed under a captain, who operated as a private contractor. That is, he paid for food, uniforms, weapons, etc., out of a lump sum dispersed by the Exchequer. Do you see the problem here? It was very much in his interest to save as much money as possible. No wonder that courtiers who wanted no part of seasickness thought that the land war was a really good idea. What they could do is take that lump sum, buy shoddy goods for their troops, and pocket the rest. No wonder that among these troops, disease was rife, morale was low, and desertion frequent. Inadequate diet and disease actually ended up killing more English soldiers in Europe than did Spanish blades or bullets.

Moreover, it turned out that Leicester, who'd been sent with the original expedition, turned out to be a poor general. He returned to England a broken man in 1588 and died soon after the Armada adventure. Fortunately, his Dutch equivalent, Prince Maurice of Nassau, was a military genius. With English help, he began to turn the Spanish tide back in the 1590s. The English began to take the auxiliary role that they'd always wanted to take.

This was fortunate, because another front opened in 1589. In that year, a Catholic seminarian assassinated Henry III of France. The Protestant Henry of Bourbon was the next in line for the throne, and he did succeed as Henry IV, but not without a fight from the Catholic League and from Philip II. The new king, besieged on all sides, asked Elizabeth for help and this time, she didn't hesitate. She sent 4,000 men in September 1589. Once again, the English were auxiliaries, helping Henry to finally triumph by 1598.

The most important theater of war for England was Ireland. As you will recall, the Tudors' hold on Ireland was always tenuous. In 1547, Henry VIII and Protector Somerset abandoned the policy of "surrender and re-grant,"

which was a relatively conciliatory policy. Instead, they began to engage in “plantation.” What plantation meant was the confiscation of the lands of Catholics—that’s both Gaelic Irish and the Anglo-Irish, who from now on I will refer to as the “Old English.” The reason they’re the Old English is that what Henry and Somerset and his successors are doing is replacing them as landowners with English and Scots Protestants, who will become known in Irish history as the “New English.”

You have Catholic landowners being deprived of their land, often sent to the barren west of Ireland. They lose their ancestral lands, and they’re replaced by Protestants. This happened in Leix Offaly in 1556, in Down in 1570, in Antrim in 1572–1573, and in Munster in 1584. In the rest of Ireland, the Tudors gradually introduced English shires, English law, and English courts. They also introduced English religion, that is Protestantism, but with much less success.

Theoretically, these measures extended English rule to the whole island for the first time. They also bred mounting resentment against all these groups. All those resentments resulted in a bewildering series of isolated rebellions by both Gaelic clans and Old English families into the 1590s. The reason they’re bewildering is that it’s very hard for the historian to keep them straight and to figure out who’s on whose side at any given time.

For example, the Butlers rebelled in the 1560s, and then the O’Briens, the Fitzgeralds, and the Butlers—therefore a lot of the South and the West—in 1568–1573. The Earls of Desmond and Lord Baltinglass in Munster and the Pale rebelled between 1579 and 1583. The whole of Knock rebelled in 1589, and most dangerously, the whole of Ulster in 1594.

These were not Gaelic wars for independence, nor were they wars of religion. They usually just began as local feuds or protests against some policy from London, and never were the Irish united. They always began with these individual families.

The English suppressed them with increasing savagery. They massacred defeated men, women, and children. They burnt crops, and they

committed other atrocities. Edmund Spenser described the results of one such pacification:

From the woods, people came creeping forth upon their hands, for their legs could not bear them. They looked like anatomies of death. They spake like ghosts crying out of their graves, and they did eat of the dead carrions. In short space, there were none almost left and a most populous and beautiful country suddenly left devoid of man or beast.

With every suppression, both Old English and Gaelic Irish proved more embittered toward the government in London, the Lord Deputy in Dublin, and the New English interlopers and the Protestant religion that they brought. Still, all that bitterness didn't seriously threaten English rule until the Spanish got involved.

By the time war with Spain started, Hugh O'Neill, Earl of Tyrone, the leading Gaelic chieftain in Ulster, thought that his position was being put increasingly under threat from both London and Dublin. In 1594, he decided to rebel, seizing Enniskillen in the East and Blackwater in the West. He was fighting for his life, so he asked for all the help he could. He asked for help from the Old English (remember, he's Gaelic), but they didn't trust him. He asked for help from the pope and the king of Spain, and this time he got some help. The Spanish mounted Armadas in 1596, 1597, 1599, and 1601. Protestant wins sank the first three. Only the last managed to land troops.

In the meantime, remember that the English Crown is fighting in the Netherlands and the Americas. It's overextended. It only manages to mount an expedition to put down the 1594 rebellion in 1599. In that year, the queen sent about 17,000 troops under Essex. He turned out to be every bit as bad a general as his stepfather. He wasted five months and £300,000 marching around southern Ireland, far from Tyrone's stronghold. He then agreed to peace talks with Tyrone that were technically treasonous. Worst of all, when he learned that people were talking about him in London, he abandoned his command, and went back to London in order to justify his conduct.

The queen only found this out when he burst into her bedchamber one morning before she had dressed. This is a *faux pas*. You don't want to do this to the queen. Tyrone, by the way, took advantage of this opportunity to burst into the South and to burn the lands of English loyalists.

Elizabeth finally replaced Essex in February 1601 with Charles Blount, Lord Mountjoy, who routed the Irish and Spanish forces at Kinsale at Christmas of that year. Tyrone submitted in March 1603 to a queen who in fact was no longer there. Elizabeth had died a few days earlier, but nobody told him.

In the end, the English war in Ireland had cost £2 million. Ulster was devastated, and Munster and Cork depopulated. Trade was disrupted and famine stalked the land. One of Mountjoy's lieutenants wrote, "We have killed, burnt, and spoiled all along the Lough." (Lough Neagh, the largest lake in Ulster) "We spare none of what quality or sex so ever, and it had bred much terror in the people."

That terror would be visited repeatedly upon the inhabitants of Ireland. In 1607, Tyrone and other Catholic aristocrats fled to Europe. This is known as the "Flight of the Earls," leaving their tenants to face the consequences. In 1608, the Crown began the plantation of Ulster. That is, they turned out both Catholic Gaelic and Old English landowners who were forced to the barren West of Ireland. Those who were allowed to stay became tenants on the land they had once owned. The government established a Scots-Presbyterian plantation in their place.

By 1640, Protestants—a tiny minority of the Irish population—owned 35 percent of the land in Ireland, and that number would only rise as the 17<sup>th</sup> century wore on. This gave the London government a much firmer foothold in Ireland but at the cost of even more bitterness and resentment—more anon.

In England, the legacy of the war with Spain was high taxes and hard times. This war stretched the capabilities of the Tudor state to their limit. Wartime expenditure was about £240,000 a year for 19 years. The regular peacetime expenditure of the Crown was £100,000. That gives you a sense of the magnitude of the war. Remember, the English Crown still had to spend that



£100,000 to keep services going. We're talking about £340,000 a year to keep the war and the home front running.

Fortunately, Lord Treasurer Burghley was able to stretch the annual revenue to about £300,000 a year. He did this in three ways. First, he pursued extreme frugality. Elizabeth was a notorious cheapskate, spending as little as possible on her court and courtiers. They're always complaining about this. She and he exploited feudal dues and old laws and taxes. Elizabeth pursues anything on the books that allows her to collect a fine or a fee. Finally, the regime sold off £100,000 in Crown lands.

Each of these measures had a down side. They diminished the queen's popularity; they diminished her financial prospects; and they weren't enough to fully pay for the war. During the war years, her outgoings regularly exceed her incomings by about £100,000 a year. To make up the shortfall, she's going to have to call a Parliament.

Queen Elizabeth didn't much like Parliaments. They were always asking about things that weren't their business, like her marriage, the succession, foreign policy, and religion. Having to call one was a sign for Elizabeth of crisis and failure. The war forced Elizabeth to call Parliament seven times between 1585 and 1601. This had two effects. First, Parliament did vote over a million pounds in taxes during this period. This enabled Elizabeth to pay for her war. She ended up dying with a total debt of £365,000. That's a lot—that's a year's worth of expenditure—but compare that to Philip II, who declared bankruptcy three times.

The second thing that all of these callings of Parliament did is give Parliament more experience, confidence, and a greater sense of corporate identity. You can understand this. The members are coming back again and again. The next time the queen asked for money, they remember, "Yeah, but you asked for money a couple of years ago. What did you do with that money? We'd like to know."

In fact, most of the time, Parliament is deciding whether to build a bridge in Shropshire or to regulate a market in Yorkshire. For the most part, when the Crown asks for money, it's pretty cooperative. But Parliament also used

its right of petition to ask the queen about uncomfortable issues, like her marriage prospects. Early in the reign, they wanted her to marry, then when they realized she wouldn't marry, they wanted to know about the succession: "Who are we getting after you?" They asked about religion. Puritans wanted more reform. They asked about war and foreign policy, in fact often put up to it by her Privy Council, which of course pleaded innocence to Elizabeth.

No wonder that Queen Elizabeth did not much like Parliaments. In her view, Parliament—the House of Commons in particular—was infringing on affairs of state, which were reserved to her prerogative. Her standard response? Sometimes she actually imprisoned the M.P.s that asked this question. One famous M.P. who was always getting in trouble was Peter Wentworth, whom she locked in the Tower several times. Once, his fellow members actually sent him to the Tower because they thought he was such a big mouth, he was going to get them all in trouble. They did it. He finally died in the Tower of London, a martyr to free speech.

Sometimes, she used her powers of veto, or if possible, she deployed honeyed persuasion. A famous example occurred in 1601. The Parliament in 1601 met in an angry mood. By 1601, the country had suffered 15 years of war and high taxes. During the mid-1590s, England saw the worst famine in over a century. Wheat prices more than doubled. Famine struck the North and West Country particularly hard. At Newcastle-upon-Tyne, they reported, "Sundry starving and dying in our streets and in the fields for lack of bread." The death rate rose by half. The wool trade was also in decline thanks to the war.

Parliament's response was to pass new Poor Laws (we'll learn about them in Lecture Twenty-Five) and to attack monopolies. What's a monopoly? The queen used to grant monopolies on a wide variety of products. She would grant them to courtiers because she didn't have any money, didn't have much land left, and didn't have anything to give them.

Imagine I'm a courtier and somehow in the queen's favor, and I receive a monopoly on, say, nails. This doesn't mean that I suddenly become a nail manufacturer. What it means is that I have a right to take a cut from every nail manufacturer in England. As a result, the price rise was passed on to

the consumer. Starch prices trebled after a monopoly was granted on that product. Salt prices increased 11 times. Salt was very important to people to preserve meat and also to give it some flavor.

In the Parliament of 1601, there was actually a moment when they read a list of the queen's monopolies. When they got to the end of the list, William Hakewill, M.P., called out sarcastically from the backbench, "Bread? Is not bread there?"

No wonder there were demonstrations in the streets outside of the Parliament House when it met in 1601. Parliament had tried to deal with the issue in the past, but it had always achieved little more than a royal promise that Elizabeth would look into it. This time Parliament introduced a bill to outlaw the practice. Elizabeth would regard such a bill as an infringement on her prerogative. She didn't want any part of this. She didn't even want it to get to the point of having to veto it.

But she couldn't just ignore the issue, so she decided to play her trump card by turning on the old Tudor charm. On 30 November, she summoned the honorable members to attend her at court—note in her home field, not theirs. She didn't go to Parliament. She then proceeded to address them in words that have gone down in history as her Golden Speech.

To fully understand what happened next, remember that Elizabeth has now been queen for over 40 years. As long as most of these members can remember, she's been the queen. By 1601, she has aged considerably, and she shows that age in her pale complexion, her excessive use of make-up, her need to use a wig because her own hair has fallen out, and her decayed teeth. Yet she still insists on cultivating the image of the aura of Gloriana. She still dresses magnificently. She still effects the regal bearing of a Tudor.

When she speaks, it must have seemed to those who were listening, kneeling, as if a goddess, at once familiar and yet from another world and time, had opened her mouth. The queen began by thanking her Parliament for its work that session and by assuring its members that,

There is no prince that loves his subjects better or whose love can countervail our love. There is no jewel, be it of never so rich a price which I set before this jewel: I mean your love ... And, though God hath raised me high, yet this I count the glory of my Crown, that I have reigned with your loves.

Having just told them that they love her, she now assures them that she loves them:

Neither do I desire to live longer days than I may see your prosperity, and that is my only desire ... My heart was never set on any worldly goods ... but only for my subjects' good.

You may remember she said that as far back as her coronation procession.

At this point, she thanked the Commons and begs them to rise. She then thanks them for informing her that the monopolies had been causing her subjects pain. Why, she had no idea!:

For had I not received a knowledge from you, I might have fallen into the lapse of an error, only for lack of true information.

Like all those other times Parliament had complained about monopolies.

That my grants should be grievous to my people ... kingly dignity shall not suffer it. Yea, when I heard it, I could give no rest unto my thoughts until I had reformed it.

Then, the old queen began a philosophical discourse on monarchy:

Know the title of a King is a glorious title, but assure yourself that ... to be a king and wear a crown is a thing more glorious to them that see it than it is pleasant to them that bear it.

She then comes to the emotional crux of her speech, reminding her hearers of Tilbury and 1588:

When God made me his instrument to maintain his truth and glory and to defend this kingdom ... from peril, dishonor, tyranny, and oppression. There will never Queen sit in my seat with more zeal to my country, care for my subjects and that will sooner with willingness venture her life for your good and safety than myself ... And though you have had, and may have, many princes more mighty and wise sitting in this seat, yet you never had nor shall have, any that will be more careful and loving.

She concluded by asking her privy councilors who sat in Parliament that, “before these gentlemen go into their countries, you bring them all to kiss my hand.”

Can there have been a dry eye in this house? As the dear old queen, probably addressing Parliament for the last time reminds them of the dangers that they had faced together? Reminds them of the love that she bore for them rather than share it with any man? Do you think anybody noticed that she’s just dismissed Parliament? She’s just sent them into their countries (that means their counties). She’s just *not* signed a bill on monopolies; she’s just promised to do something about it.

In fact, she did repeal 12 monopolies shortly thereafter, but she did so of her own free will, not because she was forced into it by Parliamentary statute. The honorable members had shown that they could get a rise out of Elizabeth, maybe even a modification of policy, but the Crown’s right to grant monopolies remained in tact because of Elizabeth’s strategic brilliance. On balance, the queen had won again. She had used the image of Gloriana one more time to deflect attention away from the cracks and tensions in the regime. The legislation died, but those cracks and tensions remained.

By the turn of the century, Elizabeth was an old and increasingly difficult woman. She was also a lonely one, for most of her old cronies were dying off: Leicester in 1588, Walsingham in 1590, Hatton in 1591, and her treasured Burghley in 1598. There still remained the two great court factions fighting to control the government—now fighting to control it when the next reign began.

They had been inherited, in a way, by sons. The Cecil faction was now led by Burghley's son, Secretary of State Robert Cecil. Elizabeth trusted him. Like his father, he was levelheaded, intelligent, and had his finger in every administrative pie. As a result, his faction controlled most of the patronage and jobs at court.

After 1598, by the way, this group was urging peace with Spain as a way to save money. On the other hand was the old Leicester faction, which had been inherited by his stepson, Robert Devereaux, Earl of Essex, whom we've met before. This was still made up of courtiers, poets, and adventurers. These people still wanted more war, more adventures, and more exciting expeditions, but Elizabeth didn't trust them to run her government.

Essex's humiliation in Ireland reduced his stock significantly. In fact, he had been feeling marginalized for some time. He'd been unable to dislodge the Cecil group, and he had been unable to get jobs for his own people. Things had come to a head first in a Council meeting in July 1598. There was a heated exchange of words about Irish strategy, apparently. (This was before Essex is sent.) Essex rises and turns his back on the queen. In other words, he's upset at something she said. He gets up and starts walking for the door, turning his back on the sovereign.

You don't do that. Elizabeth calls him back. He walks to her side, and she slaps him across the face and says, "Go and be hanged!" For Essex, in many respects a very old-fashioned nobleman, to be struck across the face by a woman violates the Great Chain of Being. It is a profound dishonor. He instinctively grabs the hilt of his sword.

For the queen, to have somebody grab his sword in your presence is an act bordering on treason. Fortunately for Essex, his fellow privy councilors sort of smuggled him out of the room. They broke them up.

Essex's stock began to plummet. After several more erratic incidents—you'll remember our friend Essex's morning bedchamber visit—Elizabeth gradually withdrew her favor entirely. This left him in an intolerable position. Here he was the leader of a great aristocratic faction, and he's unable to get people jobs. Essex resorted to an ancient method that the Tudors had

now made outdated. In February 1601, he rebels against Elizabeth. It's a thoroughly foolhardy escapade. Nobody wants to rebel. They're grumbling a little bit about high taxes, but he doesn't find much support. He attempts to rally the city of London against her, but the city of London—the crucial piece—remains loyal. He is easily arrested and executed within the month.

In a way, perhaps I should say that that execution is the last gasp of baronial revolts. In a way, he's the last throwback to all those Nevilles, Percys, and Earls of Northumberland who thought they could get the king to change or maybe even change the king through armed conflict.

By this time, it was clear to everyone but Elizabeth that her own end was fast approaching. The queen herself refused to discuss the succession, but her faithful Cecil was negotiating with James VI of Scotland, the next logical nearest heir. He promised him the English Crown if only James did nothing until the queen's death. When Elizabeth did die on 24 March 1603, Secretary Cecil played kingmaker, duly proclaiming King James VI of Scotland to be King James I of England. The House of Stuart had now ascended the English throne.

Perhaps the greatest tribute to the Tudor achievement is that unlike Henry VII, the first Stuart did ascend peacefully without any breakdown of order. Elizabeth and her predecessors had defended the country from foreign invaders; they had tamed the nobility; they had worked out a religious settlement; and they forged an English and a Protestant nation. It's a great achievement.

They had also oppressed the Irish, offended the Scots, raised the profile of Parliaments, and left unresolved great social and economic tensions. All this would come back to haunt their successors.

We'll talk about those successors in future lectures, but in the meantime, we're going to spend the next few asking how life was different for the English people after a century of Tudor rule.

# The Land and Its People in 1603

## Lecture 20

**That is, in the old days, professional historians didn't tend to worry very much about the day-to-day lives of ordinary people. Our bailiwick was the big stuff of political and diplomatic history: reigns, wars, treaties, laws, political scandals, and the biographies of about 12 really important people, with the occasional economic trend thrown in to please the Marxists. ... About the middle of the last century, we historians began to realize that that story was not the whole story, and that telling it was not enough.**

**T**he single fundamental fact that drove the economic and social history of England at the end of the Tudor period was that the population was expanding. Between 1525 and 1600, the population of England and Wales rose from 2.4 million to 4.5 million souls. Between 1600 and 1660, it rose to over 5.5 million. This growth was not steady. It slowed down or halted at times. Bad harvests made for hard times in the 1540s, 1550s, 1590s, 1620s, and 1650s. In all these decades, food grew more scarce and prices rose. Sometimes, this led to outright famine. More often, it led to poorer resistance to disease. Plague epidemics struck repeatedly between 1547 and the last outbreak in 1665. The sweating sickness, or influenza, killed many between 1555 and 1560. Other diseases included smallpox, cholera, typhus, typhoid fever, and whooping cough. Many were especially virulent among children, who had no resistance.

The early-modern English economy was not flexible enough to deal with either temporary setbacks or the overall expansion. This was made worse by Henry VIII's re-coinage and Elizabeth's high war taxes. This situation created winners and losers. Landowners did well. The scarcity of food meant that they could charge more for crops grown on their land. Food prices rose 400 percent between 1500 and 1610. The oversupply of tenants meant that they could charge higher rents. Some rents increased tenfold between 1510 and 1642. Landowners could use the cash thus raised to buy new land flooding the market from the dissolution of the monasteries. This enabled



many nobles and gentry to expand their holdings. It also enabled many prosperous yeomen to rise into their ranks.

Tenants and landless laborers, on the other hand, did poorly. High food prices meant poorer health and less resistance to disease. High rents cut into income necessary to purchase food. The glut of tenants also made it easier for landlords to throw delinquent tenants off the land and replace them with new faces. Many lost their leases or left their land for cities and towns, where work was more plentiful but growing less so as the population grew; the wool trade also went into decline. After 1607, others migrated to the new English colonies in America. Those who stayed in England and failed to find jobs became vagrants and, thus, outlaws.

Obviously, these economic changes had a profound effect on each of the ranks in the Great Chain of Being. (In this lecture, we will concentrate on rural England. Townspeople will be addressed in Lecture 25). The nobility (comprising dukes, marquesses, earls, viscounts, and barons) was expanding in size, from about 40 families in 1485, to 60 in 1600, and 130 by the 1640s. They did well economically, making thousands of pounds a year on rents and sale of produce grown on their land. But they, too, were experiencing uncomfortable changes. The Tudors had effectively reduced their power by outlawing private armies, replacing great magnates with councils or direct rule, and ruining rebellious peers by attainder, execution, and confiscation of lands. Their expansion in numbers made them less exclusive, especially since James I would actually sell noble titles.

The sheer expense of aristocratic life ruined many. It was expected that late Tudor nobles were to live in great state. They built elaborate country houses, such as Hatfield or Theobalds. They provided hospitality to their neighbors, tenants, and the monarch should he or she come to visit. The gentry (comprising knights, esquires, and plain gentlemen) was also expanding in size and wealth, as well as in importance. The availability of monastic lands swelled their ranks from about 6,500 in 1540 to perhaps 20,000 in 1640, or about 2 percent of the population. The greater gentry, now with multiple estates, rivaled the peerage in wealth, making anywhere from £500 to several thousand pounds a year. The lesser, or parish gentry, with but one estate, might still struggle to make £100.

So many moved into the ranks of the gentry, or considered themselves gentry, that they increasingly suffered from a problem of definition. By the end of the period, a gentleman was someone who could call himself that without people laughing. Gentry justices of the peace (JPs) were given increasing responsibility by the Tudors for policing the localities. At the center, the House of Commons, dominated by the gentry, was becoming the more important of the two Houses of Parliament. Yeomen were substantial farmers, perhaps 90,000 families in 1600. During this period, they split. Greater yeomen, with large estates and excelling the parish gentry in wealth, profited from inflation to become or, at least, live like gentlemen. Lesser yeomen who had no tenants and made anywhere from £40 to £200 a year lost ground as prices rose. Increasingly, these fell into the next rank.

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**By the end of the period, a gentleman was someone who could call himself that without people laughing.**

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Husbandmen (holding up to 30 acres of land and making £15 to £30 a year) and cottagers (renting only their houses and making only a few pounds a year) suffered the most from these economic conditions. Many had to take on extra work as wage laborers on their landlord's demesne land. Their wives helped by spinning or weaving wool cloth. Many went into debt to purchase crops or fell behind on their rents. During the 1590s, 1620s, and 1650s, especially, some were thrown off their land when unable to pay. They then joined the ranks of the poor. The very poor, made up of husbandmen and cottagers who had lost their land and, often, became migrants, will be addressed in greater detail in Lecture 24.

During this period, the rich were getting richer and the poor, poorer. Some historians have argued that this economic gap was mirrored by an increasing cultural distance between aristocratic landlords and their tenants that made nonsense of the old traditions of paternalism and deference. ■

## Suggested Reading

Bucholz and Key, *Early Modern England*, chap. 6, secs. 1–2.

Palliser, *Age of Elizabeth*, chaps. 1–6.

Wrightson, *English Society*, chaps. 1, 5.

## Questions to Consider

1. How did the role and fortunes of the landed aristocracy change between 1485 and 1603? How much of this was due to the Reformation? How much was due to the Tudor Revolution in government?
2. Why did the increasing gap between rich and poor threaten the Great Chain of Being? How did it lessen the effectiveness of paternalism and deference?

# The Land and Its People in 1603

## Lecture 20—Transcript

Had Mary, Queen of Scots, Philip II, and the pope succeeded in their designs upon England, the course of English political and religious history would have been very different. Short of a full-scale Spanish invasion and Counter-Reformation, most of the events we've described so far would have had very little effect on the day-to-day lives of ordinary English men and women.

To illustrate the point, I'd like you to imagine such a woman. She's a common woman. She's the daughter of a husbandman or a cottager. She's born about 1520. She's raised in the bosom of a prosperous village before the economic downturn of mid-century. She's also raised in the bosom of a Roman Catholic Church that's not been reformed. As a child, she spends her weekdays helping her mother with household chores, looking after animals and smaller children, of which there are many, and helping her father with harvest and planting. Food is plentiful.

Her Sabbath she spends in Church, where she experiences the mysteries of the Latin Mass. She prays as she is bidden for the king, Queen Catherine, Princess Mary, and the pope.

But in her teenage years, the prayers change. She still prays for the king, but now she's being asked to pray for Queen Anne, and then Queen Jane, and then oddly enough, Queen Catherine again. She prays for Princess Elizabeth and then not, and then Prince Edward. No one mentions Princess Mary anymore, or the pope.

Images come down. The Bible goes in. In subsequent years, her Church will switch from Latin Mass to English Prayer Book. The altar will be moved to the middle and they start calling it a table. Then it will go back to Latin, and suddenly the images will go back up. It turns out that they were buried in the churchyard by the vicar.

In her 40s, she'll go back again to English and the images that were restored under Mary will be burnt or whitewashed over. All the time, she's praying

for a new monarch. She marries in the 1540s, but she's not allowed to have a reception in the churchyard as she had always planned.

Yet, important as all these things are, she shrugs her shoulders at these bewilderments because what preoccupies her mind is the hardness of the times and the price of bread. That wouldn't have preoccupied the historian teaching this course some 50 years ago. That is, in the old days, professional historians didn't tend to worry very much about the day-to-day lives of ordinary people. Our bailiwick was the big stuff of political and diplomatic history: reigns, wars, treaties, laws, political scandals, and the biographies of about 12 really important people, with the occasional economic trend thrown in to please the Marxists.

This was all perfectly natural. The events we've been describing are great and momentous. These lives have been interesting. They are the stuff of great stories: Wolsey's deathbed—who can resist that? Who can resist Anne of Cleves face (apart from Henry), or Elizabeth's Golden Speech? Who does not love a great story?

About the middle of the last century, we historians began to realize that that story was not the whole story, and that telling it was not enough. Shortly after World War II, professional historians of Britain and most other parts of the world began to realize that there were whole continents of human experience—the histories of ordinary people, their work and play, their diseases, their crimes, their religious and folk beliefs (though here anthropologists gave some hints), their culture and their art (though art historians had paid some attention), their families, their marriages, their children, and their deaths—and not just the lives and deaths of men, but of that other half of the human race all too often left out of the political story: women.

To understand these histories—to recover the experience of masses of people long dead (our ancestors)—historians had to learn to navigate whole new series of documents that were not themselves very new at all. Not laws, treaties, diplomatic and political correspondence, or royal portraits—the fodder of the political historian—but utilitarian materials, seemingly without interest in their own right, containing seemingly inconsequential details

about countless lives, which, when added up, began to open windows upon these people's worlds.

I'm talking about parish registers recording baptisms, marriages, and deaths; poll books, which record votes; wills and account books, which record the material detritus of life; legal records (indictments, recognizances, and depositions); not to mention the fruits of archeology, the material culture of human life to be found in house architecture, tools, furniture, and toys.

Why this sudden interest in ordinary life? Many reasons, I think, and they have more to do with our time or the time that we've lived through in the last 50–60 years than with their time. Perhaps to the generation of historians returning from World War II, certainly to those who grew up in the 1960s, there was a sense that there was more to life than studying or even obeying authority.

In Britain, the embrace of socialism after World War II was thought to elevate the common man. It was only natural that historians would be interested in his, or her, history. There was the influence of the new social sciences—economics, sociology, and anthropology. Related to this was the prestige of thinkers like Karl Marx and Max Weber. Whatever one thought of their politics, all suggested that change came not solely from the decisions of a few powerful men, so much as from the people and the conditions under which they live.

It is to the people of England under the Tudors and Stuarts that we will now turn for some eight lectures. In the course of these lectures, we will learn of titanic forces shaping England and the English, which were at the same time less dramatic and immediately more noticeable than the Reformation or the war with Spain, but were just as important and often far more real and more pressing in the lives of ordinary people. You didn't necessarily notice the day the prices went up, but that would begin to affect your life.

We'll talk about a growing population. We'll talk about runaway inflation, the internal disruptions caused by the Reformation and war—the home front side of Reformation and war. We'll talk about poor harvests and disease and the decline of the wool trade. All these things strained the economy and the

social hierarchy of England. The result was a period in which the old Great Chain of Being threatened to fall apart.

During the course of these eight lectures, we will ask some fundamental questions. What were the lives of ordinary English men and women like at the death of Queen Elizabeth in 1603? How had those lives changed since 1485? Was their world more or less disordered than before? How did they make sense of it? How did they cope with it? How was the Great Chain of Being doing?

In this lecture, we'll examine a few simple demographic and economic facts. We're going to lay the groundwork for the other lectures. We'll talk about a rising population. We'll talk about nearly a century of high inflation. We'll go through each social rank in England to see how they did. In subsequent lectures, we'll have more time for individuals, but even as you listen to this one, bear in mind that woman. Keep her in mind and ask yourself how is her life changing over the course of the Tudor century?

Our inquiry must begin with a single, fundamental fact—that drove nearly all the others—about the economic and social history of England at the end of the Tudor period: There were more people. Between 1525 and 1600, the population of England and Wales rose from 2.4 million to about 4.5 million souls. Between 1600 and 1660, it rose to over 5.5 million. This growth was not steady. It slowed down or halted because of the following conditions: Bad harvests still happened, and they made for hard economic times in 1527–1529, 1524–1545, 1549–1551, 1554–1556, 1586–1588 (the time of the Armada), 1594–1597, 1622–1623, the whole of the 1630s, the late 1640s, and most of the 1650s. In all these periods, food grew more scarce, and, therefore, prices rose.

Sometimes this led to outright famine. More often, the high food prices led to the inability of the poor to buy it and, therefore, poorer resistance to disease. Thus, Sir John Cheek wrote in 1549, "Experience teacheth us that after a great dearth cometh a great death, and in particular that vehemency of plague naturally followeth the dint of hunger."

Indeed, plague epidemics struck repeatedly during this period, in 1546–1547, 1550–1552, 1554–1555, 1563, 1578–1579, 1582, 1584–1585, 1589–1593, 1597, 1603–1604 (which caused James I to delay his coronation), 1610, 1625, and finally (though no one knew that it was the final outbreak) the Great Plague of London in 1665. I know that this means that just about the only good period in Elizabethan history was maybe four months in 1575.

I'm sure that these lists of bad years have not been the most exciting element of the course for you. They're there to remind you that one never knew what was going to happen next. Bad years could follow upon bad years. One rarely had a whole decade of prosperity or peace. The sweating sickness, or influenza, killed many between 1555 and 1560. There were other diseases, including smallpox, cholera, typhus, typhoid fever, and whooping cough. Many were especially virulent among children, who had no resistance.

Starvation and disease actually reversed the demographic trend toward expansion. The population actually fell in the 1550s, 1590s, and 1620s. We have a weird situation here where the population is growing overall, and yet there are these momentary setbacks. The combination was devastating because on the one hand, the momentary setbacks could kill you. When they didn't, the rising population led to ever-higher inflation.

Normally, as we've said, population expansion is a good thing for an economy. It creates more demand and supplies the labor to satisfy that demand. But the economy of Early-modern England wasn't flexible enough to deal with either temporary setbacks or the overall expansion. The result was a steady inflation that was made worse by Henry VIII's debasement of the coinage and Elizabeth's high war taxes.

This situation created winners and losers. Landowners did well, especially those with extensive holdings. More people meant more demand for food. That's good if you're growing food, but the English food supply was inelastic. Not enough land could be cleared. Not enough fens could be drained. Efficient agricultural techniques were about 50 years away. As a result, the food supply didn't grow and that drove the price of food higher.



As I've indicated, historians also think that Henry VIII's two re-coinages—1526–1527 and 1544–1545—made it worse, as did Elizabeth's taxation. Another theory is that Spanish bullion from the New World was causing inflation all over Europe, as there was. It isn't just England that's going through this. It also doesn't help that England, and indeed northern Europe, went through a period of time sometimes referred to as the "Little Ice Age." Temperatures dropped by about a degree, or maybe two, at the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

In any case, food prices rose 400 percent between 1500 and 1610. The laws of supply and demand apply to people as well. The oversupply of tenants meant that landlords could charge higher rents. Some rents increased tenfold between 1510 and 1642. The oversupply of laborers meant that employers didn't have to pay more wages and sometimes they could pay less. All of these developments meant bigger profits for landowners, who could plow them into buying the new land flooding the market from the dissolution of the monasteries. This enabled many nobles and gentry to expand their holdings. It's a good time to be a big landowner.

It also enabled many prosperous yeomen to rise into that next rank and become gentle. Independent small farmers, unable to keep up, went into debt and often sold to larger landowners, which only added to the pool of available land for them. Everything's working in their favor. In short, as the Tudor sun set, the rich were getting richer.

The opposite side of the coin is, of course, that the poor tenants and landless laborers—the vast majority of the population—were getting poorer. If you've gotten out your calculator since I gave you the last statistics, you've concluded that the annual rate of inflation, if you base it on food prices and rents, was still only about two percent a year. We would be very happy with such a rate of inflation. Remember that most workers' wages had not risen since the late Middle Ages. The demographic expansion and the associated inflation were a slow-growing disaster, especially for husbandmen, whose holdings were so small that they had no surplus crops to sell. Often their income had to be supplemented by these wages that are rising.

Cottagers who owned no land and bought all their food and depended on wages did even worse. Laborers, whose wages had been fixed in the Middle Ages, did worse still. Finally, the glut of tenants made it easier for landlords to throw delinquents off the land and replace them with new faces. Many people lost their leases or left their land for cities and towns where the work was still plentiful, but also growing less so because of the decline of the wool trade and because of that increasing population that was making the town more crowded and flooding the labor market.

After 1607, for many the only hope was to emigrate to America. The poorest traveled as indentured servants, or, from the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century, as convicts whose death sentences had been commuted to transportation—in effect, banishment from England. Those who stayed in England became vagrants and, thus, outlaws.

Obviously, these economic changes had a profound effect on every topic we'll cover in the next eight, ten, twelve, or maybe even fifteen lectures. They also had a tremendous effect on each of the ranks in the Great Chain of Being. Below, for the remainder of this lecture, I'm going to concentrate on life in the country. We'll deal with townspeople in Lecture Twenty-Five. To refresh your memory, at the top of the Great Chain of Being after the king (I think we can agree that we've spent enough time for awhile on kings; we'll get back to them) was the nobility (comprising dukes, marquesses, earls, viscounts, and barons). This rank was expanding in size, from about 40 families in 1485, to 60 in 1600, and to 130 by the 1640s. They were also doing well economically, at least I think so. They were making thousands of pounds a year on rent and from the sale of produce grown on their land. Some were learning to exploit their mineral rights in tin, lead, coal, etc. A very few were beginning to invest in trade. A larger number grew wealthy because they had jobs at court or they were able to use court favor to make some money. Remember those monopolies that Elizabeth granted? Very often she's granting them to nobles. Remember those privateering voyages? Nobles like Leicester and Walsingham are investing in them.

Yet even the nobility was experiencing uncomfortable changes at the end of the Tudor period. Remember that the Tudors had sought to reduce their power by outlawing private armies and affinities. They'd also sought to

replace great magnates like the Earls of Northumberland and Westmorland at the top of the Chain in localities. Increasingly, the Tudors had relied on councils or direct rule.

I want to be careful here. This doesn't mean that they got rid of the nobles entirely from the local chain of command. In fact, at the end of Elizabeth's reign, a new office is created, that of Lord Lieutenant. The Lord Lieutenant is a peer who's in charge of accounting. His job is to maintain order, raise the militia, and oversee tax collection. Peers are still important.

Still, even the fact that they're expanding in numbers does make them less exclusive. That exclusivity would go further because James I will actually start selling noble titles in order to ease the royal debt. What had previously been something that was only awarded through favor or birth was now awarded through money.

The sheer expense of aristocratic life seems to have ruined many. It was expected that late Tudor nobles were to live in great state. As one contemporary wrote in 1665:

Now everyone of this class prepares a full table, has good attendants, keeps horses, wears rich clothes, gives great wages, retains many servants, builds magnificently, furnishes amply, adorns luxuriantly their bodies, children, and houses, by which many costly diversions the paunch of an estate is pinched.

It sounds a bit like the 1990s, doesn't it?

These people built elaborate country houses at this time like Hatfield or Theobolds. They spent half the year in London, which is very expensive. They provided hospitality to their neighbors, tenants, and the monarch should he or she come to visit. I'd like to quote just one example of the extent of this hospitality. It is an extreme example, but I think you'll get the point. It's the list of what was consumed over the three-day wedding of Lord Burghley's daughter in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century:

The guests ate six veals, 26 deer, 15 pigs, 14 sheep, 16 lambs, four kids (that's goats, not children), six hares, 36 swans, two storks, 41 turkeys, over 370 poultry, 49 curlews, 135 mallards, 354 teals, 1,049 plovers, 280 stints, 109 pheasants, 277 partridges, 615 cocks, 489 snipe, 840 larks, 21 gulls, 71 rabbits, 23 pigeons, and two sturgeon.

They got their protein anyway. All of this was washed down with 1,000 gallons of wine at a total cost of £629.

In the 1960s, the historian Lawrence Stone looks at this and looks at the expensive aristocratic life and the fact that the Tudors are diminishing their power and thinks that he sees a crisis of the aristocracy—lots of aristocrats are going bankrupt, they're not as important as they used to be. Most historians don't agree with that idea, but you can see that there are drawbacks. There is this conspicuous consumption that one has to engage in.

Many people would argue that it isn't so much that the aristocracy was falling, but that the gentry was rising. In fact, it was Stone's own academic supervisor, R.H. Tawney, who first proposed in the 1940s this very idea of the rise of the gentry. There are two problems with it. First, the term "gentleman" was never very precise, and it was being redefined in our period. This was partly because of all those new men who are moving in and buying the monastic lands and partly because James I was also selling "gentle ranks" as well. He created a new rank, that of "baronets," above a knight. Then he sold it, which meant again that gentle status, which heretofore had been associated with birth and land, is now associated with money.

Partly because contemporaries were beginning to see the value of education and professional activity, they also began to associate that with being gentle. You have a situation in which it's not very clear who is a gentleman and who isn't. According to William Harrison, "Anyone that can live idly and without manual labor, and thereto is able and will bear the port, charge, and countenance of a gentleman shall be reputed for a gentleman." Which boils down to if it walks like a duck, it must be a duck.

The second problem with saying the gentry rose is that they didn't all do so. Gentry fortunes varied from family to family. Yet overall, I accept Tawney's position. The number of gentry was increasing. For example, the availability of monastic lands swelled their ranks from about 6,500 in 1540 to perhaps 20,000 in 1640, or about two percent now of the population. This two percent now owned one-third to one-half of the land in England.

The greater gentry now had multiple estates, rivaling the peerage in wealth, making anywhere from £500 to even several thousand pounds a year. The lesser, or parish gentry—the ones with just one small estate—might still struggle to make £100. You have a sense of the ruling class beginning to split in England. The Tudors made the gentry more important because they made JPs more important. They gave Justices of the Peace more responsibility for looking out for their localities, responsibility that 100 years earlier might have been given to a nobleman. Here's another reason for believing that the gentry were rising.

At the center, the House of Commons, dominated by the gentry, was also becoming the more important of the two houses of Parliament. For all these reasons, I think we can agree that real change in this society is associated with the gentry.

Just below them came yeomen. This is the group that contemporary commentators like the best. They think of the yeomen as being the backbone of England. They are to Early-modern England the equivalent of the American middle class, which of course means that they're always under tremendous pressure—economic, social, and cultural.

Yeomen were substantial farmers. There were maybe 90,000 families of them in 1600. They owned or leased as freeholders maybe 50 acres of land. Though less than 10 percent of the population, their share of the land is rising to 25 percent in 1600. By the way, if you do the math, 50 percent for the gentry, 25 percent for the yeomanry, and maybe 10 percent for the nobility doesn't leave very much for either the king or the poor.

Yeomen lived nice lives. They slept on feather beds. They ate wheat and bread. They sent their sons to grammar schools. They could vote for their

parliamentary representatives because they were worth much more than the 40 shillings, £2 a year that was the requirement dating back from the Middle Ages. Here inflation did some good. It brought more people into the ranks of voters.

During this period, the yeomen split. A substantial successful yeoman with food and crops to sell was able to take advantage of the inflation and maybe buy his way into the gentry by purchasing some monastic lands. A poor yeoman, whose holdings were small or relatively barren, was never able to make much more than maybe £200 a year. That wasn't enough to get them into the ranks of the gentry. Over time, they lost ground. Increasingly, yeomen at this level—lesser yeomen—fell back into the ranks of husbandmen and cottagers. These people suffered more than their betters from the poor economic conditions.

Husbandmen, to remind you, are small farmers. They hold about 30 acres of land. They live in small farmhouses, which are multi-roomed now. We'll talk about that in a later lecture. They might have one servant to assist them. They made perhaps £30–45 a year; therefore, they too have a vote.

Cottagers, according to a statute of 1589, are also supposed to have four acres of land, but in fact, it almost never happens. The typical cottager just has a cottage, which remember he's renting and doesn't own. He has no substantial lands of his own. He has no surplus of food to sell. He has no servants to help him. He makes only a few pounds in a good year.

To give you a kind of base, it requires about £12 a year to support a small family. These people—cottagers and even husbandmen—would have had to find supplemental work. The men might work for the landlord on his land, and the work on their own land would be in their spare time. Women would shear sheep. They would spin. They would weave wool cloth. Many went into debt to purchase crops or fell behind on their rents. During the 1590s, 1620s, and 1650s in particular, some from this group were thrown off their land when unable to pay.

When we think of the Early-modern village, I think we tend to think of a place that's placid and unchanging in keeping with the Great Chain of Being. That

had been true at the end of the Middle Ages perhaps, but the demographic and economic changes that we've been talking about today made nonsense of that expectation of village life. According to parish registers, one-half to two-thirds of any given English village was no longer there ten years later. That is to say, these people are being forced to pick up and move. Maybe they're losing their lands, unable to pay their rents, maybe they're losing their ability to make extra money through working on the lord's land, or maybe they just haven't shorn enough sheep or woven enough wool cloth. They're on the road.

The very poor, made up of these husbandmen and cottagers who'd lost their land, along with demobilized soldiers (remember Elizabeth's wars), will be addressed in greater detail in Lecture Twenty-Four. Perhaps the most important thing to note here is the hardness of the times, which seemed to produce more of them. They moved about looking for work or charity. Others were often afraid of them.

Maybe it's time after this blizzard of statistics to go back to our woman. Just as she marries and again in her mid-30s, the harvest fails, the first time delaying her wedding because her betrothed can't support her. Over the course of her life, grain grows more dear and her landlord raises the rents. She doesn't like to think about it, but the pains in her belly from not being able to eat might explain why that last pregnancy didn't quite turn out.

She has six or seven children. One, two, or perhaps three die in the course of these various epidemics, the last one perhaps in the 1558 influenza. As the bells are ringing to proclaim Queen Elizabeth, she might be thinking of a lost child. She tries to help her husband by sheering or spinning wool, but the factor who comes round to buy the wool comes round less and less. In 1558, she sees her sons called into the militia. Fortunately, they see no action.

In the 1590s, hunger and old age carry off her husband. She knows that she was lucky to have him for so long and indeed to have lived so long herself, but from now on, she must rely on the Poor Law. What's going to happen to her? What's going to happen to her children? In the course of the next few lectures, I'd like you to remember her. I'd like you to ask that question.

In this lecture, we've begun our examination of life in Early-modern England by talking about broad economic and demographic trends. Basically, as the Tudors gave way to the Stuarts, England had more mouths to feed than it knew how. The rich were getting richer and the poor, poorer. The gentry and upper yeomanry were growing in wealth and power. The aristocracy was holding its own. Everybody else was struggling. These developments alone would have been enough to put strain on the Great Chain of Being.

Some historians would argue that the economic distance between the rich and the poor was also manifested in a cultural difference. The lives of poor people and the lives of their betters were growing so very different that there's a sort of cultural disjunction whereby each side can't understand the other. To try to understand whether that was true, we're now going to turn to the issue of people's private lives. In recent years, historians have grown more interested in private lives.

As in political history, that subject has created its own set of controversies. How big were families? Did parents love their children? Did they rear them more harshly than we do today? Did they arrange their children's marriages? Could young people marry for love? Did men oppress women? Were people more religious than we are today? Harder working? Less materialistic? How did they deal with their own mortality?

As with other questions to be posed in this segment of the course, the answers often varied by social rank. Even if we examine families by rank, it's also clear that families differed one to another.

In the next lecture, we'll begin at the top with the private lives of the landed aristocracy.



# Private Life—The Elite

## Lecture 21

**During the Middle Ages, it could be argued that there really was continuity across these various ranks and a lot of contact between them. That's no longer the case as these people build elaborate country houses behind wrought iron gates and stone walls that increasingly physically separate them off and ... have a sort of cultural implication that separates them off from other people.**

All children in the early-modern period were born at home. Despite contemporary advice to the contrary, aristocratic (that is, noble and gentle) children were then put to wet-nurse. This freed their mother to resume her duties as hostess. It allowed her to resume breeding more heirs. It may have compromised the health of aristocratic children. It certainly increased the physical and psychological distance between parents and children. As soon as possible, aristocratic children were placed into the hands of nannies and tutors. They provided instruction and companionship while parents attended to political and social business in London. Tutors introduced pupils of both genders to a humanistic education: Latin and Greek grammar and translation, some mathematics, and religious instruction.

From early adolescence, only aristocratic males received a school education. Males were trained to run the country: Around age 10, a male was sent off to a “public” school, such as Eton, Harrow, or Winchester. There, he studied English, some Greek, and above all, the classics of Latin literature and history, which were intended to train him to rule. He also “networked” with fellow future ministers, peers, and members of Parliament. At around 16, he was sent up to university, that is, Oxford or Cambridge, where he continued networking and studying a similar curriculum. Taking a degree was optional. After university, he might be sent to one of the four Inns of Court (Grey’s Inn, Lincoln’s Inn, the Inner Temple, or Middle Temple) in London to study the law and to acquire further polish. Once again, application to the bar was optional.

After about 1620, the wealthiest sons of the aristocracy embarked with their tutors on the Grand Tour of European capitals. Here, they would acquire more polish; a smattering of foreign language and culture; valuable diplomatic contacts; and paintings, sculpture, and other artworks for the family estate. Upon his return, an aristocratic male made his debut at court, where he might hope to acquire office and a suitable wife.

Females were trained to run a household. Female children received formal education from tutors and training in managing an estate, running a household, and so on from their mothers. As teenagers, a chosen few might become maids of honor at court. Their chief goal was to acquire an aristocratic husband.

Whether at court or in the countryside, aristocratic children married fairly young and almost always with a view to property. Generally, parents looked out for suitable matches. However, aristocratic children were almost never forced to marry against their will. Most people agreed that although two suitable young people need not love each other, they should be compatible and should certainly not actively dislike each other. Still, aristocratic marriages had less to do with love than money. In the rare cases in which an aristocrat married below his or her class—say, into a merchant family—it was for money, not love. This was because marriage was the most important business deal struck by a family. A good match could increase a family's power and wealth enormously. As a result, aristocrats had to learn to love each other *after* the marriage ceremony. Many never did, leading to a double standard: Many males felt free to keep mistresses and carry on affairs, often acknowledging and rearing their illegitimate children. Females were forbidden such freedom, because to engage in it would blur the lines of inheritance.

Property and the power that went with it were obviously the primary concern of aristocrats. That property was distributed according to the laws of primogeniture. Elder sons inherited the family's full estate(s); carried on the family name; and, if nobles, sat in the House of Lords. In order to preserve the family's interests, inheritors were prevented from alienating much of their land by legal devices, such as the strict settlement. Younger sons received a portion, that is, a financial stake to start them out in life; went

into the professions, becoming doctors, lawyers, clergymen, army and navy officers, government officials, and estate stewards; or went to court in hopes of winning royal favor and, possibly, the title or land that would return them to the ranks of the aristocracy.

Most aristocrats spent most of their lives in the countryside, managing their estates and building up a local interest. Gentry, in particular, intermarried with their neighbors, forming a county-based community of interest and family ties. Aristocrats based their lives in the country at country houses of increasing magnificence as one goes up the social scale. Castles had grown obsolete by 1603. They were drafty and uncomfortable. Their military importance declined with the rise of the cannon and the abolition of private armies. Instead, great aristocrats built great country houses, such as Hatfield, Longleat, or Theobolds. These houses were surrounded by extensive gardens and parks. They were divided into public rooms, including a great hall for entertaining, and private apartments containing bedchambers and withdrawing rooms. The two wings were connected by a gallery containing family portraits and other artwork designed to show the lineage and taste of the owner. Lesser aristocrats (medium and minor gentry) built less elaborate versions of these palaces.

In these houses, aristocrats lived lives of leisure and political consequence, served by armies of servants. Such houses were gathering places at election time or during political crises, when the county elite decided on strategy, and at holidays, such as Christmas, when the landlord provided hospitality to his tenants. Otherwise, the male aristocrat supervised his estates, wrote, studied, and hunted. Female aristocrats ordered the household, played music, did needlepoint, and provided heirs. Yet these houses were increasingly abandoned for nearly half the year, when their proprietors went to London.

Great aristocrats had always been drawn to court. But soon after 1603, the London season developed, from late fall to late spring, drawing even middling gentry to the capital. The season developed because the Tudors and

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**The [London] season developed because the Tudors and Stuarts wanted to keep an eye on their most powerful subjects.**

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Stuarts wanted to keep an eye on their most powerful subjects. In addition, new technology (safer, more comfortable carriages; better roads) made long-distance travel easier. Many aristocrats had to be in London to attend to government or household offices, Parliament, or lawsuits at Westminster. Others spent these months in London to attend court balls and entertainments, as well as plays at court or in the public theaters that grew up in the 1580s.

Aristocrats died as they lived—differently from their tenants and other social inferiors. Officially, they were required to mount elaborate heraldic funerals, run by the royal Office of Heraldry in London. These involved the creation and display of an effigy of the deceased, numerous banners and crests indicative of the family's many honors, and a magnificent procession to the place of internment. The emphasis was not so much on the individual who had died as on the lineage, power, and influence of the family. But many aristocratic families did not wish to go to the trouble and expense of a heraldic burial. They interred their loved ones more privately. Still, Elizabethan and Jacobite families commissioned elaborate carved monuments to the deceased. Later in the century, great families opted for private nocturnal burials.

There are two points to make about the aristocratic way of life circa 1603. The rise of the London season and gentle pursuits in the countryside stand in stark contrast to the aristocratic violence of the Wars of the Roses. This is another sign that the Tudors had tamed the English nobility and gentry. The aristocratic lifestyle was very different from that of ordinary folk—and becoming more so. ■

### Suggested Reading

Bucholz and Key, *Early Modern England*, chap. 6, sec. 3.

Morrill, *Tudor and Stuart Britain*, chap. 9.

Stone, *Crisis of the Aristocracy*.

———, *Family, Sex and Marriage*.

## Questions to Consider

1. Why was aristocratic courtship and marriage so mercenary? Why did men receive more freedom in the system than women? How do you suppose people coped with the expectations of aristocratic courtship and marriage?
2. Consider the fortunes of younger sons. What do you suppose were the overall social effects of their mobility down into the middling orders and, if successful, possibly back up into the elite?

## Private Life—The Elite

### Lecture 21—Transcript

In the last lecture, we learned how the demographic and economic situation at the end of the Tudor period and the beginning of the Stuart affected the fortunes of each of the ranks of the Great Chain of Being. As we saw, for those who made it into the upper 2 percent, it was generally a pretty good time to be a landed aristocrat. It is now time to find out how good.

In the next 30 minutes, we will examine the life cycle and the lifestyles of the rich and famous—or at least the nobility and gentry of England. You might object to me lumping them all together. After all, contemporary writers delighted in delineating the various ranks of duke, marquis, earl, viscount, and baron for the nobility, and baronet, knight, esquire, and plain gentleman for the gentry. When you read about the Great Chain of Being, it's funny. They spend pages and pages on these people; when they get down to husbandmen and the cottagers, it's like a paragraph.

These individuals themselves spent inordinate amounts of time sorting out their lineage and defending their place in the pecking order, sometimes with words and sometimes, as we'll see, with blood. In recent years, social historians have come to realize that despite that clear order of precedence, in fact, the inhabitants of these ranks at the top had a lot more in common than they did to divide them.

It's been argued first that they acted more or less in concert. They're the only classes that are well represented in Parliament, for example. They also acted together in the localities to maintain their privileged position. In some ways, they're the only real class, in a Marxist sense of having class-consciousness, to be found in Early-modern England. Nobody else knows they're a class; they do.

A second reason why they constitute a specific class together is that their lifestyle and culture were becoming more and more different from those of ordinary English men and women as we move ever deeper into the early-modern period. During the Middle Ages, it could be argued that there really was continuity across these various ranks and a lot of contact between them.

That's no longer the case as these people build elaborate country houses behind wrought iron gates and stone walls that increasingly physically separate them off and, as I'm going to argue, also have a sort of cultural implication that separates them off from other people.

In short, historians of Early-modern England have made a brilliant discovery: The rich were different. That difference began at birth. It's true that all children in Early-modern England were born at home, but despite contemporary humanistic and Protestant advice to the contrary, aristocratic children would then have been put to wet-nurse—probably a family servant or a tenant who had just recently given birth. Why? Why didn't aristocratic mothers nurse their own children? Of course, the putting of the child out to wet-nurse would have freed her to resume her duties as a wife, hostess, and manager of a great estate. Oftentimes when men were away, it was the aristocratic women who oversaw the estate.

Paramount among those duties was of course the provision of heirs. People did have some understanding of the fact that lactation can act as a contraceptive. Therefore, the freedom from lactation allowed her to begin breeding more quickly. This practice, of course, may also have increased mortality. We think that it did. It probably compromised the health of aristocratic children.

We also think that it increased the physical and psychological distance between parents and children at this rank, but the consequences of this are controversial. Historians are loathe to decide, "Therefore, all aristocratic children grew up with very distant and unpleasant relationships with their parents." If we were just to concentrate on manners, it would certainly seem to be the case. The manners in aristocratic families were extremely formal. In 1666, Sir Dudley North, the eldest child of Lord North, remembered that he would never put on his hat or sit down before his father unless enjoined to do it.

As soon as possible, aristocratic children were placed into the hands of nannies and tutors. They provided the instruction and companionship that parents couldn't provide because they were attending political and social business, often in London. It was the tutors who introduced their pupils

of both genders to a humanistic education during this period. Typically, in the nursery as soon as possible, one would be exposed to some Latin and Greek grammar in translation, some mathematics, and, of course, some religious instruction.

At the end of early adolescence, the genders split. Young girls stayed at home and learnt domestic duties. I'll come back to that in a moment. It was the boys who were sent off to receive a formal school education. Aristocratic males were being trained to run the country. Around age 10, a boy was sent off to a "public"—or grammar—school, such as Eton, Harrow, Rugby, or Winchester.

I should perhaps explain that term "public" school. It means very different things in modern times. In those days, a public school was a pretty fancy grammar school. The reason the word "public" was attached to these schools is they're not associated with a particular guild. You may remember that when I was describing Queen Elizabeth moving through the streets of London in her coronation procession that she may have referred to the school run by the coopers or the barrel makers. There were schools associated with guilds. One that survives today is the Merchant Tailors School. These schools were public in the sense that you didn't have to be a member of the guild, but they were definitely elite in the sense that the fees they charged were very high.

There the young aristocrats studied English, possibly some Greek, but above all, the classics of Latin literature and history: Livy, Cicero, and Caesar, which were intended to train him not to be a classical scholar but to rule. After all, the last great empire on earth was that of Rome. England is in the process, it thinks and hopes, of building up such an empire. Where else would young aristocrats learn by example?

Here our young aristocrat also "networked" with fellow future prime ministers, peers, and members of Parliament. You can trace in their correspondence that they have known each other since they were small boys. Some day they'll be members of that great fraternity, the House of Lords or the House of Commons.



At around age 16, a young aristocrat was sent up to university. There were really only two in England that mattered at this time: Oxford and Cambridge. There he continued networking and studying the above curriculum. Taking a degree was optional. The university existed so that he could network and acquire some polish. Similarly, after university, he might be sent to one of the four Inns of Court (Grey's Inn, Lincoln's Inn, the Inner Temple, or Middle Temple. They're all based in London. These are law schools.

Again, this didn't mean that the young aristocrat was necessarily going to become a lawyer, particularly if he were an elder son and he was promised an estate. He was there to pick up some polish, to have a home base from which to explore London, and to network and meet the other people with whom he would be running the country.

At some point, our young aristocrat was also expected to internalize a code of honor. The code of honor said that that aristocrat was always going to be on show. His life would be acted on a public stage and therefore reputation was everything. The most important component of reputation was honor. Honor was an obsession with any self-respecting aristocrat. As a result, the relations among aristocrats were governed by elaborate formality. One had to get the title of address just right. A duke was always "your grace." Any other titled aristocrat was "my lord." Anyone below a baron was "sir."

Gestures were extremely important. The depth of a bow would be indicated by whether the person you were bowing to was superior or inferior on the Chain, or whether one took one's hat off. Hat etiquette was extremely important. Who could pay a visit to whom was very important. To give someone the wrong title or to treat them without the courtesy due their rank was to insult them deeply. Such insults were revenged with violence—hence, the duel.

Remember that 100 years earlier before the Tudors, you might have revenged an insult by making war with your private affinity on the person who'd insulted you. No longer. Dueling was the method of choice, preferably with a sword. A sword takes some skill to handle and therefore befits a gentleman. This is what happened when the Tudors tamed the aristocracy. They no longer fought massive wars; they fought duels. There was some attempt by

James I to ban dueling, but with little effect. A young nobleman, in particular, was expected to have survived a few of these encounters. This led to the assertion in *The Gentleman's Calling* of 1660 that, "A man of honor is now understood to be one that can start and maintain a quarrel."

After about 1620, there was a new stage of aristocratic education. That was the Grand Tour. The idea behind the Grand Tour was that you went abroad and picked up more polish and some artwork to bring back home to the family estate. Upon return, you would go to court. The court was where you would make your debut and where you would possibly acquire an office and a wife.

What about younger sons? At this point, we should remind ourselves that thanks to the laws of primogeniture, only eldest sons of an aristocratic family were guaranteed an estate. Younger sons were provided a portion, but Thomas Wilson called it "That which the cat left on the malt heap." The portion was intended as a stake for some sort of professional career, maybe in the law, maybe in the Church, or maybe in trade. As England's military situation heated up in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, it was also possible to earn glory in a military career and who knows, maybe impress the monarch enough to get a title of your own and found a cadet branch of the family.

Female children received formal education from tutors. Princess Elizabeth and Lady Jane Grey had great humanistic educations. More likely, girls were trained to run a household and manage an estate. Their chief goal was to marry an aristocrat. For this reason, a female aristocrat would also be provided with a dowry and as a teenager, if she was lucky, she might be selected to become a maid of honor at court. The court was the great marriage market of England for aristocrats. This was where you made a suitable match.

This brings us to the most important question we have to answer in this lecture: What was a suitable match for a young aristocrat? These days, we're used to thinking that we marry only for love. My students are always shocked when I remind them that, "Yeah, you do, but you still probably marry within your own class. How soon do you ask the person in the bar, 'What do you

do? What car do you drive?'" Material circumstances mattered even more back then.

Why didn't they marry for love at this rank? Remember what's at stake here. Individual lives were not guaranteed to be terribly long. Average life expectancy was about 35, but the family endured. The most important business transaction any family would make in a generation was that marriage contract. A landowning family with a title or a crest could not afford to throw away its children and this opportunity on someone who wouldn't be bringing comparable advantage to them.

It's true that marriage just across class lines was not unheard of. That is, an impoverished noble family might marry into a wealthy gentry one, or maybe even into a mercantile family. In this case, each family got something. The mercantile family gets the honor of the title; the gentle or aristocratic family gets some land or some money.

A love match with no material advantage, say between a nobleman and a seamstress, or a gentlewoman and her footman, was a total non-starter. It never, ever happened except in Jacobean comedies. In most of those, at the end you find out that the footman was really the son of a duke. This was not supposed to happen.

I should point out that aristocratic children married fairly young compared to everybody else: 18, 19, sometimes even earlier. Child marriages, however, were unheard of below the ranks of royalty. You may have a sense of little aristocratic 14-year-old or eight-year-old brides, but it didn't happen. Generally, parents had a very important input in this. They would scout out possible marriage partners at court or in the country in the county community. However, contrary to the popular image, almost no one got forced to marry somebody that they hated. That is to say, children had veto power over any proposed candidate.

Still, aristocratic marriages had more to do with money than they did with love. As a result, the overall image of aristocratic marriage is one of formality. These people often lived separate lives. The old double standard applied: For those who couldn't fall in love or didn't fall in love *after*

marriage, particularly aristocratic men, there were affairs and very often natural children who were looked after, often within the family. It was generally considered honorable to acknowledge your illegitimate children if you are a man.

The woman had no such freedom, because, of course, she could not be allowed to pollute the family line. The reason for that has more to do with inheritance and land than it does with anything else.

Still, I don't want to leave you with the impression that all aristocratic marriages were drudgery and loveless. There is plenty of evidence—and you probably know this in general—of arranged marriages that ended up as love matches in the end. I'll give you an example. In 1584, Robert Sidney marries Barbara Gamage, a Welsh heiress. He had never met her. The marriage follows negotiations between the two families. He spends his entire career abroad on diplomatic missions for the Tudors or as a soldier, and yet his letters are full of endearments like “sweet wench” and “sweetheart.”

Over a century later, there is no doubt that if you read the letters of John Churchill, Duke of Marlborough, that he was head over heels, fully committed in love with Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough, who was definitely the dominant partner in the relationship. She later on tried that on Queen Anne and it didn't work, but it worked with John.

The reason for this social arrangement is of course property. It was the reason for these arranged marriages. Elder sons, as we have seen, inherited the family's estate according to the law of primogeniture. They carried on the family name. If nobles, they sat in the House of Lords. In order to preserve the family's interests, inheritors were actually prevented from alienating any of their land, if at all possible, by a legal device known as the strict settlement. In other words, when you inherited your land, it came with a legal device that said you can't do anything with this until you draw your own will. Marriage contracts always involved a promise of how the will was going to be drawn up. No land was exchanged at marriage.

The idea is to prevent a spendthrift heir from ruining the family. The idea is to make sure that the estates will be kept intact.

The terms of the will could be broken, hence a very busy practice in all of the London law courts that handle land. One of the reasons that aristocrats are drawn to London is to oversee all of their legal doings and often times this means trying to break the strict settlement—trying to break the will.

It has been said that the English are one of the few cultures on earth in which it is smarter and more fashionable to live in the countryside than in town. That's because the landed aristocracy set the tone for English culture for much of its history. Most aristocrats spent most of their lives in the countryside managing their estates and building up a local interest. Gentry in particular intermarried with their neighbors, forming a county-based community of interest and family ties.

This has led some historians to posit a notion of a county community. Certainly, for the gentry in particular, particularly parish gentry, their world really was their county. You may remember that when Queen Elizabeth dismissed the members of the House of Commons and, in fact, the House of Lords, she referred to them going back to their "countries." You referred to your county as your country. You should have a sense that a Yorkshireman would consider a Lancashireman a completely foreign person with a different accent and probably different morals.

Some historians, however, have also pointed out that the big aristocrats, the ones with multiple estates, of course had interests in more than one county. Generally, when I talk of peers as opposed to the gentry—or maybe even major gentry—you should have a sense that their interests spread to more than one county, especially those who are going to court. Of course, they might intermarry with someone whose landed estate was at the complete other end of England from theirs.

Aristocrats based their lives in the country at country houses of increasing magnificence as you went up the social scale. Note I said country house. I didn't say castle. By about 1570, castles are pretty well obsolete. There are a lot of reasons for this. One is that the Tudors are de-emphasizing that military aspect of the aristocracy. Remember that affinities have now been banned. Another reason is the cannon. Cannons pretty much made nonsense of thick castle walls. They served no purpose anymore. Since castles were

always rather dreary and drafty, it behooved these aristocrats—those with money—to start to build what came to be known as “prodigy houses.” I refer to Cecil’s Hatfield, Hatton’s Holdenby, Sir John Thynne’s Longleat, or Lord Burghley’s Theobolds.

Such houses reflected in their architecture two contrasting goals of aristocratic life: on the one hand, the need to display the status and power of the nobleman, and on the other, the need for some degree of privacy for their families. These houses were surrounded by extensive gardens and parks. I think that fulfills both functions, doesn’t it? It’s splendid, but it also allows us to retreat behind these walls.

They were also divided. Usually, these houses are in the form of an “E” or an “H.” You should think perhaps of a dumbbell. There are always two ends to a great country house. One is the public side, which contains a hall where the aristocrat might host his neighbors. On the other side are the private apartments containing bedchambers and withdrawing rooms. Indeed, that word “withdrawing room” reminds us that the proper meaning of a “drawing room” is not that it’s a place where you do art, it’s a place to which you withdraw to avoid the admiring throngs of servants, tenants, local farmers, and seekers of favor.

The two wings of this house would be connected by a gallery containing family portraits and other artwork designed to show the lineage and taste of the owner. Lesser aristocrats and minor gentry might build something similar but on a much smaller scale.

Such houses were gathering places. They were gathering places for the tenants at Christmas and for the local elite whenever there was a big royal strategy they had to implement. When parliamentary elections were coming along, this was where you met. Remember, I talked about parliamentary selection. You might decide that Jim over there, my lord of the manor, hasn’t been to London lately and that’s where they would be selected.

As we’ve seen, Queen Elizabeth frequently imposed on the hospitality of her most prominent subjects during her summer progresses. She would visit to show favor and to save some money. It was expected that the local

aristocrat would put on a magnificent show full of entertainments, masques, and tournaments. The Earl of Leicester once spent £6,000 to entertain Queen Elizabeth at Kenilworth Castle, only to find that she was offended by one of the pageants that she felt was insulting to women. A sum of £6,000 is nearly a year's expenditure for your average aristocrat.

At least the man who paid the piper didn't have to play the tune. That's what servants were for. A great aristocrat like Leicester might have over 100, and a middling gentleman at least 20 servants. There were gentleman ushers to open doors; valets and ladies maids to assist with his or her lady's toilet; tutors to instruct his children; nannies to look after the children; cooks for the kitchen; servers for the hall; footmen, coachmen, and grooms for the stables; and groundskeepers. The tenants, of course, do most of the work of farming. Gamekeepers looked after the hunting. They were all headed by a major-domo or an estate steward assisted by bailiffs and foremen.

By the way, as the 17<sup>th</sup> century wore on, these complements of servants were reduced. Aristocrats started to decide they had to save money. This is the great age of vast household establishments. In other words, the point I want to make here is that virtually the whole of this society and the efforts of 98 percent of the people are all geared to providing a comfortable life for that blessed 2 percent at the top. All sorts of things that we have to do ourselves, like run to the bank and wash our clothes, they didn't have to do.

This raises the question of what these aristocrats actually did. Remember, they did no work. If one were a male, one might govern as a Lord Lieutenant or a JP. Both genders supervised their estates, especially if the man was away in London governing. There was always hunting, the traditional cure for aristocratic boredom. Remember that aristocrats began life as warriors, and hunting is—after all—making war on animals. Female aristocrats ordered the household, played music, did needlepoint, and provided heirs. Both genders engaged in a round of hospitality.

Increasingly, without warfare to occupy them, nobles and gentlemen often engaged in writing. The age of the illiterate nobleman who only knew how to fight battles was pretty much gone by about 1550. This is instead a great age of aristocratic amateurs. Sir Thomas More wrote *Utopia* and *The History of*

*Richard III*. Sir Thomas Wyatt developed the sonnet. Sir Philip Sidney wrote *Arcadia*. Sir Walter Raleigh wrote *The History of the World*. Sir Francis Bacon, Viscount St. Albans, laid the groundwork for the modern scientific method and the advancement of learning in *The New Atlantis* and for modern prose in his essays.

All these men combined private learning with public duty. More and Bacon both rose to be Lords Chancellor, and Wyatt, Raleigh, and Sidney were courtier soldiers. In fact, in many aspects, this was a sort of golden age for the sort of aristocratic writer.

Yet these country houses that created so much culture were empty for nearly half the year. By about 1600, a new institution has developed in aristocratic life: the “London season.” Aristocrats had always been drawn to London. They’d always been drawn to the court. But increasingly, the Tudors and Stuarts wanted them at court. They wanted to make the court even more attractive so that they could keep an eye on their landed aristocracy.

New technology made long-distance travel easier: better roads and the carriage with box springs. If you went to London in 1400, you had to all ride horseback. Think of the difficulties for one of these aristocratic ladies who’s breeding and their children (if they brought their children). Now in the coach you could travel in relative safety in a matter of days or hours where it would have taken weeks via horse or donkey.

There were also better ways of connecting London to the countryside. The postal service, which was run by the Crown, is increasingly efficient. It’s not really much of a service. It’s usually a footman who’s been asked to deliver a letter, but the Crown did regulate this to some extent from London. It’s becoming more efficient.

There were also newsletter-writing services. That is, you could hire someone in London to write down all the news at court. What that meant was that it was easier to maintain contact with relatives. Of course, this was another incentive: You’d read about what was going on at court, and you’d say, “Hey! I’d like to be there.”



Aristocrats came to London to attend government or household office, to sit in Parliament, to supervise their lawsuits at Westminster, and increasingly, under Elizabeth, also to attend the theater, court balls, and entertainments. There was a lot of fun that drove aristocrats to London during this period of time. It took them away from their country houses. By the way, do you note how that fits in with the theory that aristocrats are being distanced from their tenants? In 1400, you'd hang out at the castle. You'd see your workers in the fields. By 1600, you just want to make sure the money is coming in. You're not supervising them personally.

Aristocrats died as they lived—differently from other people. Officially, they were required to mount elaborate heraldic funerals run by the Office of Heralds in London. These often took over a month to plan. Obviously, embalming was a very important part of this process. They involved the creation and display of an effigy of the deceased, as well as numerous banners and crests indicative of the family's many honors, all to be mounted on a bier some 20, 30, or even 40 feet high.

There would be a magnificent procession to the church. That of Edward, Earl of Derby, in 1572 was typical of this rank. It began with 100 poor men wearing black, followed by a choir of 40 wearing surpluses; an esquire on horseback bearing the late earl's standard; 80 gentlemen of the household; his two secretaries; his two chaplains; 50 knights and esquires; the preacher, of course; the dean of Chester; an esquire carrying a great banner; four heralds riding horses carrying the late earl's helmet and sword; a black-draped chariot with the coffin surrounded by 10 hooded esquires on horseback; the chief mourner; the earl's son and successor with two ushers; and bringing up the rear, 500 yeomen and servants from his household and, indeed, from the countryside.

At the burial itself, the chief officers of the nobleman's household broke staves of office (the symbols of their office), usually across the coffin, and threw them into the grave as a sign that their service to their lord had ceased. Clearly, the emphasis was not so much on the individual who had died, but on his lineage and power and the influence of his family.

It's true that as the 17<sup>th</sup> century wore on, aristocrats tended to want to shy away from these kinds of funerals. They were expensive; they were a pain to put on. In fact, by the later 17<sup>th</sup> century, they'll actually start burying aristocrats at night. Even so, they still spend a lot of money on carvings in the church and monuments to indicate the power of the aristocratic family.

There are two points I want to make in conclusion about aristocratic life circa 1603. First, the rise of that London season and all those gentle pursuits—"Oh, we'll go to the theater"—should indicate to you that the Tudors had succeeded in taming the aristocracy. These are people who 100 years before would have said, "Oh, let's attack the king!" That's not happening anymore. It's another sign of Tudor success.

The other point I want to make is that the aristocratic lifestyle was very different from that of ordinary folk and becoming more so. As historians have pointed out and as I have pointed out, increasingly aristocrats are retreating behind high walls and vast deer parks. They travel in closed carriages, surrounded by armies of servants, which of course exist in part to keep the throng away. Their withdrawal culturally and emotionally from the lives of their communities over which they lorded led to an increasing gulf between them and everyone below them in the ranks of the Great Chain of Being.

Having learned how the better half lived, I think it's now time for us to bridge that gulf. We will now turn to the lives of ordinary people.

# Private Life—The Commoners

## Lecture 22

**This doesn't mean that ordinary English men and women lived in some sort of pre-industrial paradise. ... Their lives were spare of material comfort, often marred by disease, and lacking in opportunity compared to ours. ... Did those facts affect their attitudes toward life and death and each other? Were their attitudes different from ours? ... Would they choose to live like us if they had the chance?**

**P**eople tended to marry later at the lower ranks in society, and menopause for early-modern women came earlier than it does today. This, along with frequent migration as people looked for work, resulted in smaller, more nuclear families with fewer siblings. Most people wanted children: Nearly 80 percent of married couples had a child within the first two years of marriage. Childbirth was communal. Because most people could not afford a doctor, they relied on local midwives, with other women of the community pitching in. Childbearing itself was dangerous without painkillers or antibiotics (witness Jane Seymour), but not as dangerous as one might think: Less than 4 percent of births resulted in the death of the mother. Most couples stopped having children around age 35. In addition to early menopause, there is evidence of primitive contraception.

Nursing was performed by the mothers themselves. This may have facilitated bonding with children. It also meant longer intervals between pregnancies, which, in turn, meant fewer siblings. Yet infant mortality at all ranks was high. One in eight children died within the first year. One-quarter of all children died before age 10. Because of this, historians have long debated whether parents grew as attached to their offspring as we tend to do. Some, noting the high death rate among children and the reticence with which parents noted these deaths in surviving letters and diaries, have concluded that parent/child relations were cold by our standards. But other historians have found plenty of evidence of parental love, concern, and indulgence, such as the making of toys.

The level of education a child received depended on his or her social rank. Children of merchants and yeomen went to grammar schools until mid-adolescence. These schools charged high fees. Their curriculum centered on Latin and English. Children of husbandmen and cottagers went to petty schools until about seven or eight, when they would be needed on the farm. These schools were often endowed by the local wealthy. They were staffed by the local clergy. The curriculum consisted of reading (English), writing, and some arithmetic. By 1600, some 25 percent of males and 8 percent of females could write their names. Even more could read simple ballads and religious texts. Four-fifths of boys and half of girls at this level experienced service outside of the family. If their parents could afford it, young boys between the ages of 14 and 21 served apprenticeships to tradesmen. Young girls were “farmed out” to other families in the village.

Courtship for the lower orders involved more individual choice than it did for the aristocracy, but community and material circumstances still mattered. Most young people met while in service away from home, at church, during the harvest, and so on. Nearly all courtship was directed toward marriage. There was little “casual dating.” Young people below the level of the elite were much more free to choose their own partners because there was no property to worry about. Thus, young people at this level married for love. Women looked for good providers. Men looked for effective managers of households.

Both genders married later than their betters (late twenties for males, mid-twenties for females), waiting until they could afford to set up a house. Parents might be consulted, but they had no absolute veto. The community might become involved to foil an unsuitable match, that is, one that would end with the couple being supported by the parish poor rate. A promise to marry was considered a virtual marriage in canon law. This led to the popular convention that physical relations could begin as soon as two young people had agreed on marriage. As a result, about 20 percent of all brides went to the altar pregnant. This was frowned on by the church, but it does not mean that such promises were exchanged lightly or to trick the other person into a sexual relationship: The illegitimacy rate in early modern England was only 2 to 3 percent.

Marriage at this level was also, on average, closer and more companionate than it was for aristocrats. In theory, marital relations were to follow the dictates of Saint Paul. Husbands were to love their wives but rule over them. Wives were to submit. Physical correction was thought to be a last resort; physical abuse was not tolerated. In practice, early-modern marriage at this level seems to have been warmer and even more egalitarian than for the aristocracy. Poor people had to work together to survive and preserve their children.

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**Marriage at this level was also, on average, closer and more companionate than it was for aristocrats.**

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Naturally, the range of marriages was very wide, from happy to miserable. Divorce was nearly impossible, because few could afford the legal fees. As a result, most unsuccessful marriages ended with informal separation, often abandonment. Given an average life expectancy of 35, most marriages did not last much longer than ours do, on average, today. Rapid remarriage was expected, especially for widows. Widows often had property, which this society expected to be vested in a man. Widows were assumed to have sexual experience that had to be channeled.

The performance of work was another condition separating ordinary people from the elite. The hours of work were still sunup to sundown and, thus, longer in summer and fall. Work for men and women was heavily physical but not highly structured, timed, or pressurized. Men plowed, planted, reaped, and repaired fences. Women milked, weeded, sewed, spun wool, and looked after children. During peak times (harvest, in particular), they would join their husbands in the fields. Children were assigned light tasks according to their ages, mostly helping with animals.

Life at home was marginally more comfortable than it had been in 1485. Houses had grown more elaborate. A yeoman might live in a multi-roomed timber-frame or brick house, with the following features: a hall with a hearth in the middle; a cross passage separating two wings, one wing containing storage rooms and the other, a parlor; an upstairs level with bedrooms. Husbandmen and cottagers lived in houses of two or more rooms. Ordinary people had more possessions. Yeomen's inventories reveal feather beds,

pewter, even silver, and books. Husbandmen and cottagers possessed sheets and pots and pans.

Diet had not changed in centuries. Yeomen had meat and fish (for the well off), wheaten bread, dairy products, and wine and beer. Husbandmen and cottagers had rye bread, milk and cheese, and beer.

Even in good times, no one could depend on a long and healthy life. Illness was frequent and mysterious. The connections among hygiene, diet, and disease were not understood. Simple infections could prove fatal. Accidents were common. For example, almost no one knew how to swim. Only the wealthy could afford doctors, and medicine was still based on humoral theory and classical precedent. Death for ordinary people, like birth, was experienced communally. Most people died at home. Relatives and local women dressed and prepared the body. The funeral was open to the whole community. Gifts were given to guests and to the poor. The funeral concluded with a feast designed to heal the community. This last raises the question of to what extent the common people formed a community, among themselves and with the ruling elite. The next few lectures will address this issue. ■

### Suggested Reading

Bucholz and Key, *Early Modern England*, chap. 6, sec. 4.

Morrill, *Tudor and Stuart Britain*, chaps. 5, 6, 10.

Wrightson, *English Society*, chaps. 3–4.

### Questions to Consider

1. If parents did love their children, how can we account for their reticence about their loss? Why might early-modern people seem to be less forthcoming about their emotions than we are?
2. Note the difference between religious and social theory (on courtship, marriage, contraception, and so on) and how people actually lived their lives. Why, do you suppose, did they break the rules? Were they better off for having done so?

# Private Life—The Commoners

## Lecture 22—Transcript

In the last lecture, we examined the private lives of the blessed two percent of the population who ran England. We looked at their births, education, courtship, marriage, mature lives, and deaths. In this lecture, we will examine the same series of topics, but for middling and ordinary people.

What we'll find, I think, is that while life may have been harder and poorer in material wealth for the lower orders, it may also have been more fulfilling emotionally. Unlike their betters, ordinary people reared their own children, married for love, and experienced less formal and more intimate family relations. Even their deaths were less hierarchical and more communal, as ordinary men and women were attended, waked, and buried by their friends and neighbors.

Still, we should be careful here. This doesn't mean that ordinary English men and women lived in some sort of pre-industrial paradise. You'll remember what's happening in terms of their wages and in terms of the prices they have to pay for food. As we've seen, death tended to come earlier for people in those days than it does for us. Up to that time, their lives were spare of material comfort, often marred by disease, and lacking in opportunity compared to ours. As you experience this lecture, you might ask yourself, "Did those facts affect their attitudes toward life and death and each other? Were their attitudes different from ours? Did they know that their lives were hard and short, or are these such relative concepts that they wouldn't have affected how they viewed their lives? What would they make of our lives today? Would they choose to live like us if they had the chance?"

Once again, the differences between an upper-class life and everyone else's began in the family at birth. Ordinary families tended to be smaller and more nuclear than those of their betters, say four to five people. There were many reasons for this. First, there was that average life expectancy of 35–38 years, which of course meant that you were unlikely to have living grandparents or even aunts and uncles. The number of children born to individual families at these ranks was limited. Parents tended to marry later at the lower ranks

in society, in their mid- to late 20s for men, and their early to mid-20s for women.

By the way, this is just one of those wonderful facts that we can glean from parish registers. Thank God for Thomas Cromwell, at least in this context.

The reason for the later age of marriage is that young couples were expected to be financially self-sufficient and able to set up their own households. It took awhile to get to that point. You remember that aristocratic couples don't have to worry about that. It's all going to come to them.

Once a household was set up, it was likely to be kept small by the very high rate of infant mortality at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. According to our best estimates based on parish registers, one in eight children died within the first year of life. Fully one-quarter never reached age ten.

Because of poor diet, menopause came earlier for women than it does today. When it did not, there's some evidence that once Early-modern people felt that they'd had enough children, they engaged in some primitive contraceptive techniques. I'll tell you a little bit more about those later.

Finally, as economic conditions worsened, remember that people are getting up and moving. They're having to leave the village, and that broke families up. The result is always smaller, nuclear families with fewer siblings than aristocrats might be able to count on.

By the way, note that given the average life expectancy, again I would remind you that children would have seemed to be everywhere, perhaps 40 percent of the population. Older people, say over 60, were less than 10 percent. No wonder that the experience of elders was valued. No wonder that people worried constantly about Queen Elizabeth dying.

Most people wanted children. Nearly 80 percent of married couples had a child within the first two years of marriage. There's those parish registers again. What would we do without them? The official purpose of marriage was not to fulfill mutual love and not to prevent sin. It was to have children.



Infertility was viewed as a personal tragedy, and it elicited a great deal of sympathy and, as we've seen in one case, a revolution in church and state.

Childbirth was communal. Since most people couldn't afford a doctor, they relied on local midwives and other women in the community who pitched in. The latest evidence indicates that these midwives were neither incompetent nannies, as contemporary physicians alleged, nor were they deeply wise sages with a rich fund of arcane knowledge of the earth, as proponents of the New Age might imagine. What they were was experienced. They knew how it went. They knew how to do it. This meant that if the birth was an uncomplicated one, everything would probably be fine. If it was complicated, you might be in very great trouble.

Another thing that's true is that during the time of laying in, gender roles were reversed. Women took over the house. Women's knowledge was crucial.

Childbearing itself was dangerous without painkillers or antibiotics. We'll all remember the example of Jane Seymour. But it was not as dangerous as you might think. Less than four percent of births resulted in the death of the mother. Most couples stopped having children around age 35. In addition to early menopause, there's some evidence of primitive contraception. Coitus interruptus was the preferred method. Presumably, it was every bit as effective then as it is today. There were primitive condoms made of animal skins. There's also plenty of evidence of attempts to self-induce abortion, either by jumping off tables or taking potions.

While the effectiveness of all these techniques and devices is impossible to assess, what is clear is that family planning was not a modern invention.

At this rank, mothers nursed their own children. This may have facilitated bonding with the children. It also meant longer intervals between pregnancies. That too would contribute to smaller families and fewer children.

Because of that high rate of infant child mortality—the sheer fragility of children's lives in Early-modern England—historians have debated vigorously about whether parents grew as attached to their children as we

can tend to do. There is a theory out there most notably associated with Lawrence Stone, a very great historian who wrote a famous book, *Family, Sex and Marriage in England*. He noted two pieces of evidence. One was this high death rate among children. There was also what he saw as tremendous reticence on the part of parents when they discussed those deaths. Take the example of the preacher Ralph Joslin, who wrote at the death of his infant son at ten days of age that, “He was the youngest and our affections not so wanted on to it.”

Stone also points out that children were dressed like little adults with no concession to their individuality as children. There were no toy stores and few purpose-built toys to buy for them. Contemporary guidebooks—the equivalent of Dr. Spock or *What to Expect the First Year*—emphasized discipline. What children’s literature there was was all moral instruction. The best children in these books didn’t act like real children at all; rather, they were little moral paragons who often made their parents proud by dying and going to heaven.

Stone concludes from all this that the loss of children was so common that parents reserved themselves. They didn’t love their children, or at least they’d wait until they knew if they were going to have them for awhile.

There’s another school of historians led by Ralph Houlbrooke, Linda Pollock, and Keith Wrightson, who found plenty of evidence of parents who loved their children. You need to know that a lot of Lawrence Stone’s evidence comes from the aristocracy. We’ve seen evidence for why aristocratic relationships with children would tend to be formal. It’s true that we don’t have a lot of writing from ordinary people about their children. We have other evidence of parental love. For example, aristocrats often did record how regular ordinary people treated their children. Often those entries are full of affection.

There’s also plenty of evidence of parental concern. It’s very clear from wills that people worried about their children and their futures. Also, there were few toys to buy, but plenty of toys were made. We know that from eyewitness testimony and a few survivals.

The underdeveloped state of children's clothing and literature may tell us more about the state of the fashion industry and about writing at the time than it does about how people felt about their offspring. As for guidebooks, anyone who has ever thrown Dr. Spock against the wall knows that guidebooks are to some extent perhaps to be taken with a grain of salt. They certainly reflect perhaps what ought to be done. They don't necessarily reflect what people actually really do.

Finally, remember that 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century English people were not 21<sup>st</sup> century Americans. I don't think it's a gross generalization to say that English culture traditionally encourages people to be reticent and to keep strong feelings private. What I call "Oprah moments"—moments when we share with pure strangers our most intimate thoughts and experiences (what's happened to our children, our own personal philosophies of life)—we share them on buses, airplanes, and with the bartender. Those things don't tend to happen in English culture, at least not today. They're an American phenomenon. I wonder if a 17<sup>th</sup> century parent would have thought of writing down the pain in their heart at the death of their child. Would that necessarily have been their way of coping with the grief?

Still, the Marquis of Winchester thought he knew that, "The love of the mother is so strong, though the child be dead and laid in the grave, yet always she hath him quick in her heart." What modern could disagree?

One of the ways in which parents showed love for their children was by educating them. As with so much else, the level of education one received was utterly dependent upon social rank. Children of merchants and yeomen went to grammar schools until mid-adolescence. These schools, though not as exclusive as the public grammar schools, nevertheless charged high fees. They were staffed by professional schoolmasters, whose principal task was education. Their curriculum centered on Latin and English.

Children of husbandmen and cottagers went to what were called petty schools until about seven or eight, when they were probably needed back on the farm. These schools were often endowed by local wealthy people to educate poor boys and occasionally girls. They were staffed by the local clergy. The curriculum consisted of reading English, writing, and some

arithmetic. These people don't need to know Latin; they're not going to be Roman consuls.

By 1600, some 25 percent of males and 8 percent of females could write their names. Even more could read simple ballads and religious texts. That was, as we pointed out, very important for the Reformation to get off the ground. Don't forget, with numbers like that, even if you can't read, somebody can read to you.

After their formal education, most children went into domestic service for a time. Four-fifths of boys and half of girls at this level of society were loaned out to other families in this way. If their parents could afford it, young boys between the ages of 14 and 21 served apprenticeships to tradesmen. This meant they would travel to a city or town and for seven years they would live in the household, probably above the shop, of a merchant or a tradesman. During this time, the apprentice would learn a trade and be subject to the rule of the head of the household *in loco parentis*. As part of the apprenticeship agreement, he would be forbidden to marry, but if he was smart, he would cultivate the master's daughter, because that was the easy way to move up in life.

He'd probably raise a little hell. These are 14–21-year-olds away in the city. Hormones are raging. There's a phrase from the time—"apprentice riots." We'll talk about apprentice riots in a subsequent lecture.

Young girls were "farmed out" to other families in the village. Whether you had few girls or many girls, you would send them out one-by-one to other families to serve and to learn how to run a household. This is very odd. Suppose you had a small number of girls. Why would you need to send them away? I find that historians are baffled by this, though I'm told that if you talk to mothers and daughters they'll explain it to you. It's that young people tend to learn best from someone other than their parent. They tend not to want to listen to their parent. People knew that in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

This was certainly true, though not entirely true, when young commoners chose their life partners. Courtship for the lower orders did involve more individual choice than it did for the aristocracy. Community and family

feelings were still important. I told you about this farming out that took place. Most young people met while in service—away from home, at church, during the harvest. These activities facilitated mixing, and there was no parental supervision. In fact, believe it or not, contemporaries seemed to have realized that young people needed privacy. The only time you read about privacy in the 17<sup>th</sup> century is when older folks sort of let the younger folks be.

Another interesting fact is that nearly all courtship was directed towards marriage. There was very little “casual dating” in this society. Early-modern young people meant business.

Young people below the level of the elite were much more free to choose their own partners, as I said, and therefore to marry for love. They had no property. They had nothing to lose. There was nothing to lose, so they could marry anyone they wanted, right? Not quite. Women still looked for good providers. They’re utterly dependent on that. Men looked for effective managers of households. Both genders married later than their betters, as I indicated, waiting until they could afford to set up a house. Parents might be consulted, but they didn’t have a veto. Even if you didn’t get the blessing of your parents, you might very well marry your choice.

The community, however, might become involved. They might want to foil a match that was likely to result in children, but unlikely to result in those children being supported. The local community doesn’t want all those people on the Poor Law. Their taxes will go up, so there is an element of community pressure.

Once a couple decided that they were made for each other and assuming that they were in a position to set up house, things moved quickly. According to canon law, once a promise to marry had been made—that is an oral declaration in the present tense—the couple were to all intents married. The Church wanted you to go through a church ceremony. Marriages that didn’t were considered irregular, but they were still valid. Even a future tense promise—“I will marry you”—was considered binding. Anything else was bigamy.

This led to the popular convention that once a promise had been exchanged, physical relations could begin. We know from those good old parish registers that something like 20 percent of the brides in England went to the altar pregnant. In fact, the amount of physical activity may have been more. That's the number who had babies within eight months of their marriage. Of course, in those days, premature babies didn't make it.

You might be tempted to think, therefore, that people were exchanging this promise all the time in order to have physical relations. It didn't happen, believe it or not. We have very little evidence of illegitimacy at this rank—some two-three percent of births were illegitimate. In other words, once a contract was made, the marriage almost certainly went forward. Any couple who failed to go through with the contract and had a baby would become pariahs on the village.

Young men did leave on occasion, leaving their would-be spouses to become that worst category of offender against the Poor Law: bastard-bearers. These were punished severely. By the way, there's also very little evidence of infanticide—of desperate mothers murdering their babies. This may be because it didn't get reported—we're unclear about this. So far, we don't know of it happening very much.

What was marriage like at this level? On average, closer and more companionate than that of aristocrats. In theory, according to the guidebooks and sermons, marital relations were supposed to follow the Great Chain of Being and of course, St. Paul—First Corinthians 7 and Ephesians 5. The husband-father was the head and ruler of the household and so wielded God's power. According to William Gouge's *Of Domestic Duties* (I doubt that that book would sell very well today, but that was the major guidebook for marriage in 1622), the "father is the highest in the family, and he has authority over all and the charge of all is committed to his charge. He is the king in his home."

Scripture, sermons, and the guidebooks also stress mutual respect and love. The aristocratic double standard and wife beating were not sanctioned. They were preached against from the pulpit, and they were attacked by the courts. On the other hand, wives were supposed to submit to virtually any

ill treatment short of actual physical abuse. This explains why in 1565, an ecclesiastical court case witness deposed that, “She never saw Mr. Beck use any cruelty but that any woman might well bear at her husband’s hands.”

There seems to have been an expectation too that if a wife was particularly unruly and refused to go along with her husband’s instructions, he might chastise her physically as a last resort. As with so much else in this society, hierarchy and order mattered overall.

In practice, though, I would say from my research and that of others, that Early-modern marriages seemed to have ranged, just like modern ones, from the blissful to the miserable with every station in between. Generally, Early-modern marriages of ordinary people seemed to have been warmer and more egalitarian than those of the aristocracy. There were plenty of reasons for this. For one, remember that these people had gotten to choose. They had presumably chosen for love to a great extent.

Also, poor people had to work together to survive and preserve their children—that old newlywed effect that I think is so powerful in bringing young people together when they marry. Thus Edward Newby of Durham declared in his will of 1659 that, “What estate he had, he together with his wife Jane had got it by their industry.” Wives assisted husbands by tending vital farm animals, spinning wool, and going out to the fields to weed, make hay, or bring in the harvest.

That means that all marriages lasted a very long time. Their world would have been very different, in that we have these high rates of divorce. No! In fact, their marriages broke up just as often as ours do, because people only lived on average to be 35–38 years old. There was a constant changing of partners. Very few people, like our old woman from Lecture Twenty actually stayed married for half a century.

Divorce itself was nearly impossible. Few people could afford the legal fees. As a result, most unsuccessful marriages ended with separation, which was sort of tacitly understood. Often the man abandoned the woman and just took off for another town.

If you were widowed, rapid remarriage was expected. Widows often had property. This both increased their attractiveness and made them an anomaly in a society that vested property in men. Widows were also assumed to have sexual experience that unmarried women didn't have. Therefore, they were competition. They had to be neutralized. In fact, you will probably be surprised to learn that of the two genders, in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century it was widely believed that women had the most powerful passions, emotions, and sexual drive. Male commentators are constantly complaining about the inordinate sexual drive of women and that it has to be channeled. This is a society that has to do something with these women.

Some urban widows might have taken on their husbands' trade when they died, but that was always thought to be temporary. If your husband was a candlemaker, you might do candles for awhile, but you're probably looking for another candlemaker to take over the trade.

In other words, this is a society that simply does not know what to do with unattached, experienced women. Remember that women had no legal existence apart from their husbands or fathers. Indeed, think of all the contemporary designations of women's status: daughters, wives, widows, or spinsters. All those words are in relation to some man.

Men were narrowly defined too. They were defined by their work. One was a blacksmith, a turner, a husbandman, etc. The performance of work was one of the things that separated you from the gentle classes. It's what made you an ordinary common person.

Work hasn't really changed much in the 125 years of Tudor rule. In agriculture, it was still sunup to sundown, longer in summer and fall than in winter. Work for men and women was heavily physical but not highly structured, timed, or pressurized. That must have been a tremendous plus. Most men spent their time plowing, planting, reaping, and repairing fences. Women milked, weeded, sowed, spun wool, and looked after children. This is information I think I'm probably repeating. Children were assigned light tasks according to their ages. None of this had changed very much.



Life at home had. It was marginally more comfortable than it had been in 1485. Houses had grown more elaborate. You'll remember the mud huts with which we started. During the 16<sup>th</sup> century, there was a great rebuilding, beginning in an area known as the Weald of Kent in the southeast and radiating northwards and westwards.

A yeoman might very well live in a multi-roomed timber-frame or brick Wealden house. This is very much like what you think of when you think of a Tudor farmhouse. It had windows, because its walls are stronger, so you could punch holes in them. It had a hall with a real hearth in the middle, and a cross passage separating two wings. One wing would contain storage rooms, but the other had a parlor. Upstairs would be bedrooms. Even for people at this level, there's that separation between privacy and utility.

Husbandmen and cottagers probably lived in houses with two or more rooms now—small cottages, but recognizable to us, I think. Ordinary people also had more possessions than they did. Yeomen's inventories now reveal feather beds and pillows instead of rushes on the floor; and plates and spoons instead of "trenchers" (just sort of wooden bowls out of which one would eat). They might have pewter, or even silver. They also had books. Husbandmen and cottagers possessed sheets and pots and pans.

Diet hadn't changed very much in centuries. Yeomen still ate or drank meat and fish, wheaten bread, dairy products, and wine and beer. Husbandmen and cottagers still eat or drink rye bread, milk and cheese, and beer, hence the term "ploughman's lunch," which anyone who's been to an English pub is familiar with.

Even in good times, no one could depend on a long and healthy life. Illness was frequent and mysterious. I think this is one of the things that really separates us from them. We don't expect to be in pain. We expect to have it taken care of if we are. Early-modern people, on the other hand, lacked even a basic understanding of the connections among hygiene, diet, and disease. We've already noted the frequent outbreaks of plague, influenza, typhoid fever, cholera, whooping cough, and innumerable undifferentiated fevers, fluxes, and agues. My personal favorite is "gripping of the guts." I don't

know what griping of the guts is, but I suggest you probably want to avoid it at all costs.

We've talked about disease in this course, but let's talk about things like a simple infection. You're doing some farm work and you cut your finger. That could kill you in a couple of days. A sore in the mouth: the bacterial stew of pregnancy and childbirth—all of these things could be easily fatal. Other people might live for years with debilitating conditions: arthritis and rheumatism, bad or missing teeth (nobody had their teeth after 55), lameness due to rickets or badly set bones.

Accidents were common. As I think I've mentioned before, almost no one knew how to swim. A child drowning in a river, pond, or well is the most common type of accident for them. You spend all this time around animals, and a lot of them are bigger than you. They can gore, crush, and maim.

Since dwellings were made of wood and thatch, fire was an ever-present danger, especially in cities where buildings were packed in behind those old medieval walls. We'll find that out when we visit London in a couple of lectures.

Only the wealthy could afford doctors, and that was probably just as well given the state of contemporary medical science. Contemporary medical science was still humoral and based on classical precedent. In other words, Hippocrates and Galen knew just as much about the human body as any royal physician in the 16<sup>th</sup> or 17<sup>th</sup> century.

What that meant was that Early-modern medicine was pretty iffy on diagnosis. It knew when you had the plague. It didn't really know what griping of the guts was. We have all these graphic names for diseases, but they're completely unspecific scientifically and that should tell you something.

As far as treatment was concerned, here is where Early-modern doctors violated that Hippocratic oath all the time. They did plenty of harm. There are numerous horror stories I could tell you. One of my favorites—if I may use that term—took place in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century (the early 1700s) and

concerns Sir David Hamilton, the Queen's personal obstetrician and the leading practitioner of his day—this is the best male midwife in England. The Earl of Westmorland brings him the case of his wife, the Countess, who is overdue. His prescription is to drive her in a coach along a bumpy road. The contemporary description of what happened next is that this is what happened, to her great misery and the loss of the child.

Ordinary people were perhaps luckier. They turned to wise men, cunning women, folk remedies, and prayer—without much evidence of effectiveness, but at least much less expense.

Given the absence of scientific explanations and modern medical remedies, the Reformation actually played a big difference here. Remember that it eliminated saints to pray to, shrines to visit, relics to touch, and other medieval cures. This must have been a terrible psychological blow to people. I'll talk more about this in a later lecture. You no longer had these things that you could fall back on.

Death came suddenly and inexplicably. For ordinary people, it was experienced, like birth, communally. Most people died at home. Female relatives and local women would dress and prepare the body. Prior to the Reformation, mourners engaged in a pre-funeral vigil, called a "wake," in the presence of the corpse, followed by the funeral itself, and then prayers for the deceased for days, months, and years on end to assist him or her on their passage through purgatory.

Of course, the Church of England abolished all of this ritual, though people gave it up only gradually. The funeral itself did remain, and it too was open to the whole community. Gifts, such as gloves and rings, were given to guests and to the poor. The funeral was still concluded with a feast designed to heal the community.

Over the course of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, even these rituals would eventually give way to more private funerals in which the nuclear family concentrated on its grief.

I want to stop in 1603 with that word “community.” If you’ve derived anything meaningful from this lecture so far, I hope it’s the degree to which ordinary people relied on their community. Aristocrats have all those servants. What do ordinary people have? What does our woman, born in 1520 and living into the 1590s, have?

She has her community, which I think raises some interesting questions. How did ordinary people view their communities? Did they see themselves as part of one? If so, what were its parameters? Did it include the rest of the village or town? The county? Did it include some construct called “England?” Did it include the ruling elite? Were there two cultures in England or one? What kept community together? What broke it apart?

In the next two lectures, we’ll take on those questions.

# The Ties that Bound

## Lecture 23

**Life in early modern England was fragile and tenuous. It was lived very much on the margins of subsistence and in the shadow of unexpected sudden death from famine, disease, and accident. ... Ordinary people couldn't go it alone. To make it through life, they depended on each other and on their community.**

**W**e have seen that English men and women were separated by region, by class, and by gender and that their relationships to each other could be broken easily by death and desertion. What institutions in English life bridged these gaps and made sense of these tragedies? What coping mechanisms and support systems were available to help people get through life?

Religion was intended to be the first bulwark imparting meaning, preserving order, and knitting together community. In a society without science and technology, a democratic civic consciousness, or a large police force, religion was the principle source of worldview, structure, and universal justice. Religion provided a theory of cosmic and social order (the Great Chain of Being) and warned against social strife. It explained misfortune and provided consolation. It provided a code of moral conduct and a system of rewards and punishments. Protestant religion, in particular, helped to define the English as a chosen nation engaged in an epic struggle against the popish anti-Christ.

English men and women learned all this, primarily, in church. Every English subject was required by law to attend Sunday services by the Acts of Uniformity (1549, 1552, 1559). The church itself was arranged hierarchically: The most preeminent families sat near the front; their ancestors were buried under the floor; and their achievements were memorialized on the walls. Thus, the social order was linked to the divine order. At church, all were required to pray for the monarch and members of the royal family. Loyalty was further encouraged in sermons celebrating the Great Chain of Being and warning of the consequences of breaking it. Church holidays and

festivals provided relief from the daily grind. Church ceremonies marked the important rites of passage in each life: baptism at birth, confirmation upon reaching adulthood, matrimony, churcing and baptism at the birth of one's children, and Christian burial at one's death.

Ironically, as we have seen, religion divided and perplexed Englishmen and women as much as it united them. Puritan reformers objected to many Church practices, often dividing the parish. Diehard Catholic recusants stayed away entirely, becoming objects of suspected disloyalty. Successive Reformations and Counter-Reformations had reduced the active priesthood to some 8,000, not enough to cover the 9,000 parishes in England, most of which remained poor. This led to continued absenteeism, pluralism, and clerical poverty. Those who attended services often remained ignorant, oblivious, or even disruptive of what went on there. Above all, Protestant religion deemphasized the sacraments, exorcism, and the prayers to saints. Thus, it provided much less help or consolation in a world where death came early, suddenly, and with little recourse to science or medicine. As a result, many continued to believe in old Catholic practices or even pagan superstitions. This helps to explain continued popular belief in witches, faeries, and ghosts.

England in 1603 was not a welfare state. When religion failed, there were no public social service agencies to turn to, apart from the Poor Law. Instead, the people of early modern England turned to each other. In theory, early-modern Englishmen and women could fall back on paternalism and deference. The ruling elite was taught that it owed paternal care and protection to those whom God had given them to rule. In return, the ruled were taught that they owed their rulers deference, loyalty, obedience, and respect. But some modern historians have suggested that upper-class paternalism was merely a screen for the greed of the elite 2 percent. After exploiting the masses to gain their wealth, the occasional Christmas feast was mere tokenism. The lower 98 percent may have feigned respect, but in reality, they resented the inequalities of their society and knew that they could depend only on family and friends.

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**Kinship was in fact not very strong beyond the nuclear family. ... Most people in the village relied on an informal network of neighbors.**

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Kinship was in fact not very strong beyond the nuclear family. That is, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins did not play an important role in each other's lives below the level of the elite. Why? With so short an average life expectancy, living extended family members were rare. Migration in search of work broke up big families. On the other hand, if a migrant had extended kin at his destination, he could reasonably expect lodging and some financial assistance until he got on his feet. Most people in the village relied on an informal network of neighbors. We have already seen how neighbors came together to assist each other in birth and death. In between, they could call on neighbors to lend money or tools.

Neighborhood peer pressure could stifle or curb objectionable behavior. A good neighbor was never (or rarely) loud, drunk, blasphemous, litigious, quarrelsome, abusive, violent, sexually incontinent, a gossip, or a scold. Neighbors who violated these norms might find themselves subject to ostracism, anonymous and obscene graffiti (*squibs*), “rough music” with pots and pans (*charivari*), or a “riding” out of town on a rail in effigy or literally (a *skimmington*). Only when public ridicule failed would one's neighbors turn to the courts—ecclesiastical, civil, or criminal. It was a major tenet of neighborliness that one did not resort to the law lightly or quickly. Good neighbors worked things out.

But what if things could not be worked out? What if religion failed to instill conventional morality and good behavior? What happened when ordinary people refused to show deference, respect kin, or get along with neighbors? In the next lecture, we shall examine what happened when the order of the community broke down. ■

### Suggested Reading

Bucholz and Key, *Early Modern England*, chap. 6, sec. 5–7.

Palliser, *Age of Elizabeth*, chap. 11.

Wrightson, *English Society*, chaps. 2, 7.

## Questions to Consider

1. How did the Reformation change most people's experience of religion? Did it make religious ritual and dogma more or less relevant to their lives? Which institutions serve a similar function in our lives today?
2. Was paternalism merely a screen for upper-class greed or did it do some good in the early-modern world? Did the lower orders believe in it, or were they merely playing along with the game?



## **The Ties that Bound**

### **Lecture 23—Transcript**

In the last lecture, we examined the lifestyles and life cycle of the poor and obscure: the ordinary people. In the course of that examination, I hope that you noticed two things. First, that life in Early-modern England was fragile and tenuous. It was lived very much on the margins of subsistence and in the shadow of unexpected sudden death from famine, disease, and accident.

The second thing I hope you noticed is that ordinary people couldn't go it alone. To make it through life, they depended on each other and on their community. This lecture examines those institutions, habits, and attitudes of English life that were intended to provide meaning in the face of life's tragedies, and community in a cold world. These included popular religion, paternalism, extended family ties, and the support of one's neighbors.

We begin with some questions. We've seen that English men and women were divided by region, class, and gender. Their relationships to each other could be broken very easily by death and desertion. What institution in English life bridged these gaps and made sense of these tragedies? What coping mechanisms and support systems were available to help them get through life?

I suppose that the most important one—certainly the most obvious—was religion. Religion was intended to be the first bulwark imparting meaning, preserving order, and knitting community together. In an age where average life expectancy was less than 40 years, where death could come suddenly and for no apparent reason, and before modern medicine and science, religion provided one's lone explanation and much consolation for life's tribulations and surprises.

Indeed, remember that this isn't just a society without science and technology. It also lacks a democratic civic consciousness and a large police force. Religion was also the principal source of worldview and structure. It was the standard against which justice was measured. Religion provided a theory of cosmic and social order (the Great Chain of Being), and warned against social strife. Religion explained misfortune and provided consolation

and hope. Religion provided a code of moral conduct in a system of eternal rewards and punishments.

After the Reformation, the Protestant religion, in particular, also helped to define the English as a chosen nation engaged in an epic struggle against the popish anti-Christ. That is, English Protestantism begat English nationalism.

English men and women learned all this primarily by going to church. Every English subject was required to go to church according to the Acts of Uniformity, beginning in 1549 and culminating in that of 1559. The Church itself was arranged hierarchically. The most preeminent families sat in boxes near the front. Their ancestors were buried in the floor. Their achievements were memorialized on the walls.

Everyone else sat in the order of their status. The most humble members of the parish—such as our woman from Lecture Twenty—sitting in the back. Thus, in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, Richard Gough could actually organize his history of the village of Myddle by writing it according to the pews.

In short, the social order was linked directly and manifestly physically to the divine order. At church, everyone was required to pray for the monarch and members of the royal family. Loyalty was further encouraged in sermons celebrating the Great Chain of Being and warning of the consequences of breaking it. Church holidays and festivals provided relief from the daily grind. Church ceremonies, as we've indicated several times, provided important rites of passage in each life: baptism at birth, confirmation upon reaching adulthood, matrimony, the "churching" of women and the baptism of their infants at birth, and of course Christian burial at one's death.

The parish community provided the cast of characters for some of one's most important memories. It is thus not a little ironic that religion divided and perplexed those communities as much as it united them at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. You'll remember the diehard Catholic recusants stayed away entirely, becoming objects of suspected disloyalty. In fact, they formed their own little communities apart from the main community. That sense of being a group apart for Catholics in England lasts right through to modern times. Anyone who's ever read *Brideshead Revisited* will remember that.

Would-be Puritan reformers went to the Church of England, but objected to many of its practices. For example, they didn't like the idea of "churching" women. I should explain now what that is. This is a ritualistic thanksgiving upon successful completion of childbirth. The woman hasn't been able to go to church while she's been laying in, so she's brought to the church door and blessed and reaccepted into the community. Modern feminist historians have sometimes argued that this is a sign of this society's hostility to women: You're somehow out of bounds until you've been churched. In fact, it's very clear that contemporaries didn't see it that way. Women in particular enjoyed the ceremony. They were queen for a day.

Puritans didn't like any of this. They didn't like the throwing of grain at a wedding. We would throw rice, so in that sense Puritan attitudes are the same ones embraced by modern insurance companies. They didn't like the clergyman's greeting at the church door of a funeral, also a sign of community. As we shall see, they hated Christmas celebrations.

These big events would be stressful at any time in life. Can you imagine the level of tension around such an occasion when an individual Puritan conscience clashes with local tradition ("But everybody does it this way. Why do you have to be different?"), or the convictions of the clergyman, or the official rules of the Church. Imagine you're the clergyman, and you're about to perform baptism on a child and this particular local Puritan says, "I don't want no sign of the cross." You know that if you don't do the sign of the cross, the local bishop is going to be on your back. Here, something that's supposed to emphasize community, but actually only emphasizes division.

Puritans also objected to the fact that despite successive Acts of Uniformity, church attendance was often pretty poor. All sorts of people neglected Sunday services for all sorts of excuses: "I don't have suitable clothes. I feel unwelcome because I'm suspected of carrying plague." Plague carriers were banned at the church door. Perhaps one had been excommunicated for one offense or another.

Some argued, as did Elizabeth Jones in 1583, that they could serve the Lord in the fields as well as in church. I think that's an argument with which we're all familiar. Others simply preferred the pleasures of the alehouse,

gambling, Morris dancing, bear baiting, hunting, archery, or stool ball, a primitive football or soccer. Thus, the great Puritan divine, Richard Baxter, remembered his boyhood in Shropshire:

In the village where I lived, the reader read the Common Prayer briefly and the rest of the day, even till dark night almost, except eating time, was spent in dancing under a maypole and a great tree not far from my father's door, where all the town did meet together, so that we could not read the Scripture in our family without great disturbance of the tabor (drum) and pipe and noise in the street. When I heard them call my father 'Puritan,' it did much to cure me and alienate me from them, for I considered that my father's exercise of reading the Scripture was better than theirs.

Yeah, but they were having more fun.

Indeed, how one kept Sunday was a real sign of where you fit in this cultural split between Puritans and everybody else. Puritans often mounted campaigns to regulate such activity. Proponents of stool ball and good ale had their champion. It turned out that in 1618, King James I issues the *Book of Sports*, which of course advocates attendance at church, but then enumerated all of what he considered to be the perfectly acceptable country activities that one could participate in on a Sunday.

As we'll see, that sort of paternal permissiveness on the part of the Stuarts was one of the things that really bothered Puritans. It divided them from their fellow parishioners, but also from the Stuart monarchy.

When people did attend church, they often nevertheless remained ignorant, oblivious, or even disruptive of what went on there. One clergyman complained that, "Some sleep from beginning to end as if the Sabbath were made only to recover the sleep that they have lost in the week."

These were the docile ones. In fact, according to presentments to ecclesiastical courts examined by the historian Keith Thomas, congregants often fought over seating. They spat. They knit. They told jokes. They even fired guns in church. In Dorchester in the 1630s, church officials complained

of Henry Green, who was charged with laughing and talking and walking up and down during services. This is perhaps not as bad as the behavior of teenage boys, who exchanged physical blows or “morting” greetings of, “Lousy rogue! Lousy bastard!” during sermons.

Sermons’ length and entertainment value have always been an issue for avid congregants. Bishop Gardner complained of a 16<sup>th</sup> century parish that, “When the vicar goeth into the pulpit to read that himself hath written, then the multitude of the parish goeth straight out of the church, home to drink.” Those who stayed remind Keith Thomas of nothing so much as a tiresome class of schoolboys. When the rector at Holland Magnate, Essex, preached about Adam and Eve clothing themselves in fig leaves, somebody raised their hand and wanted to know where they got the thread.

When the priest at Much Dewchurch (and let me reassure that I do not make these names up), Herefordshire, quoted church fathers in the original language, one auditor commented that he “would rather hear a horse fart than the vicar preach in Latin.”

That kind of irreverence—can we agree that this is irreverent?—often manifested itself in alehouse parodies of the Eucharist, or mock baptisms of dogs, cats, sheep, and horses. These are actually hard for historians to figure out. We’re not actually quite sure if people were doing this to make fun of baptism, or if they really did want to baptize their horse into the One True Faith.

All of this may help to explain why the general level of theological knowledge among the populace was always notoriously low. Both before and after the Reformation, clergy complained that many—in some parishes most—people couldn’t recite the “Our Father,” let alone the paternoster or the Ten Commandments. Even those who attended the sermon reverently may not have done so knowingly.

Take the example of a man of 60, a veteran of thousands of sermons who, on his deathbed:

Being demanded what he thought of God, he answers that he is a good old man. And what of Christ? That he was a towardly youth. And of his soul? That it is a great bone in his body. And what should become of his soul after he was dead? That if he had done well, he should be put into a pleasant green meadow.

It may have been an age of faith, but please don't assume that it was an age of informed faith. If all this were not enough to discourage a clergyman, successive Reformation and Counter-Reformation purges had reduced the active priesthood to about 8,000. This was fine, except that there were 9,000 parishes in England at this time, most of which remained very poor. This led to continued absenteeism, pluralism, and clerical poverty. There was an increasing sense of overwork and frustration on the part of the Anglican clergy.

By the way, another reason for this is that landowners would often take the tithes themselves. This was known as "impropriating tithes." Here's the poor priest doing his best to make a living out of this parish, probably having to farm what's called "glebe land" attached to the church. It's never the best land in the village. It's the land the church is built on. Meanwhile, the landlord is taking the donations of the congregation. This could only have made clashes with Puritans acrimonious. You put up with all of this as the clergyman, and you've got to deal with some guy who doesn't want the sign of the cross. Clashes with unruly parishioners must have been most depressing.

Above all, Protestant religion may have been of less assistance to ordinary people than its predecessor. It de-emphasized the sacraments, exorcism, and prayers to saints. These were all remedies against the power of Satan and the power of disease. Remember, before the Reformation, if you, your child, or your cow were ill; if you went on a long trip; or if a storm was brewing—you called on a particular saint, charm, medal, or amulet for preservation. Of course, the Church would argue that preservation was never automatic. These saints don't necessarily get what you want from God in every case, but I think it's fair to say that people who believed strongly in the intercession of saints can sometimes feel that they have a sort of in in this way. According to Reginald Scott, writing in the 16<sup>th</sup> century:

St. Roque was good at the plague, St. Petronil at the ague. As for St. Margaret, she passed Lucina for a midwife. For madmen which are possessed with devils, St. Roman was excellent. Friar Ruffin was also pretty skillful in that art. For botches and biles, Cosmas and Damien. St. Clair for the eyes, St. Apollonia for the teeth, St. Jove for the pox, and for sore breasts, St. Agatha.

According to John Aubrey, writing as late as the 17<sup>th</sup> century:

The shepherds of St. Oswald's tan prayed, logically, to St. Oswald to protect their sheep. They also prayed to St. Osyth to preserve them from fire, water, and all misadventure. When they bake bread, to God and St. Stephen to send them a just batch and even.

It's easy to scoff at this, and undoubtedly there was plenty of errant superstition mixed in with the simple faith, but the point is surely that in a world of such danger and uncertainty, where life was short and tenuous, without any recourse to the wonders of modern science, medicine, and technology, such remedies may not have provided cure, but they sure provided comfort and psychological reassurance—and maybe even a degree of consolation.

The Reformation sought to wipe all that away. At best, these practices were superstitious; worse, they were papist; worst of all, they were the work of the devil. In fact, though much of the paraphernalia of saints, blessings, and special prayers was banished from the churches, many people found that they didn't want to give them up. Of course, what the Reformation is saying is don't do any of that, just pray directly to God and that will be enough. That wasn't enough for people trying to get through life.

This helps to explain continued popular belief in witches (we'll talk about them below), faeries, and ghosts. It also helps to explain why this society needed other forms of adhesive to maintain community. I'm now going to switch from religion to paternalism, deference, kinship, and neighborliness.

England in 1603 was not a welfare state. When religion failed, there were no public social service agencies to turn to, apart from the Poor Law.

Instead, the people of Early-modern England turned to each other. In theory, Early-modern English men and women could fall back on paternalism and deference, the grease that was supposed to lubricate and thus maintain the links in the Great Chain of Being.

As we've seen, the ruling elite was taught that it owed paternal care and protection to those whom God had placed them over. In return, the ruled were taught that they owed their rulers deference, loyalty, obedience, and respect. In the words of the Book of Common Prayer, "To order myself lowly and reverently to all my betters."

There is evidence that paternalism was dying as the Tudors were. There are lots of reasons for this. Remember that the Tudors had broken up the old affinities. That was a place where paternalism and deference had been exercised. Don't forget that the economic situation in this period is encouraging a more capitalistic—read ruthless—exploitation of lands, rents, and workers by landowners. Don't forget that Protestant theology has de-emphasized good works, and that members of the ruling elite were withdrawing from the communities they ruled. It's awfully hard to be a nice paternalistic landlord if you're hiding behind your high walls and your gates or you're living in London half the year. Maybe you're not there for the Christmas feast.

Some modern historians, led by E.P. Thompson, have gone further to argue that upper-class paternalism was a lie. It was a screen for the greed of the elite two percent. After exploiting the masses to gain their wealth, the occasional Christmas feast was mere tokenism. In Thompson's view, the English ruling elite were mere banditti, draining the land and their tenants of wealth and energy to supply their inordinate wants.

At the same time, these historians have argued that the lower 98 percent may have been equally dishonest: feigning respect, tipping the cap, and pretending to respect their betters, but in reality resenting the inequalities of their society. There was the case of a Norfolk parish clerk who, in the wake of Kett's rebellion, supposedly said, "There are too many gentlemen in England by 500."



In my view, Thompson has a point, but it may be a little unfair. It may be judging the past by the standards of our own time. I basically think he's right, but I want to qualify this. The upper classes were out for themselves. We've seen that in many cases, land was more important to them than their own religious beliefs—remember the dissolution of the monasteries—and their own individual family members. I suspect that like so many of us who give a few token dollars or pounds to charity, these people did genuinely believe that they were doing some good for their fellow men and women when they endowed a school, or hosted a Christmas feast, or gave judgment as a JP.

Indeed, I think I would like to argue that they were. Some may very well have been trying, at least subconsciously, to buy off their tenants or to assuage a God who seemed to give very little Scriptural encouragement to the wealthy.

I think the ultimate truth is that most of these people had so poor an understanding of the general economic and social situation that they had no idea that the problems that they were attempting to solve were very largely of their own making and far too vast to be fixed by a few well-placed bequests or a Christmas pudding.

For their part, the English peasantry was increasingly adept at using the idea of paternalism, saying, "You owe us." They turned that deference on and off to win concessions from their betters. We're going to see this in the next lecture. For the really important stuff, they knew that they could only depend on family and friends—and mostly, as I'm going to argue, friends.

Kinship was not really very strong in Early-modern England. By kinship, I mean your relationships to family beyond the nuclear family (which I've argued was strong)—your relationships to grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins. The reason for that is easy. There weren't very many of them. Most people didn't have living grandparents, for example. Remember that because of the migration, a lot of your cousins would have gone somewhere else. You would not have had contact with them.

On the other hand, there were situations in which you could call on extended kin. Let's say that you were migrating yourself, and you were heading off to the big city or even to America. If you had a relative there—any relative

no matter how distant—somebody fairly far away on the family tree—you could still call them “cousin.” The word “cousin” applied to virtually anyone who shared the least drop of blood with you. You could ask for a favor—maybe some financial help to start you off.

But that was about it. Most people in the village relied on an informal network of neighbors. There were of course no guidebooks on how to be a good neighbor. Neighborliness was a set of attitudes, shared but unspoken, that dictated certain behaviors that helped people to get along with each other and to get through life.

We’ve already seen how neighbors came together to assist each other in moments of crises like birth and death. In between, they could call on neighbors to lend money or tools (there were no banks), or to watch a house if they had to be away for an extended period. In other words, people relied on their neighbors to do for them what we rely on institutions for: banks, hospitals, mortuaries, rental agencies, and insurance companies.

But neighborliness wasn’t just about helping each other. It was also a force for social control. It was a way of keeping people of the same rank in line—a way of forcing them to maintain traditions, the peace, and the economic viability of the community in hard times.

One manifestation of neighborliness is, “We’re going to poke our nose in the business of your marriage. We’re going to make sure you don’t marry someone who’s going to leave you poor and maybe leave an illegitimate child on the Poor Law that we’re all going to have to pay for.”

There was this involvement in other people’s lives. It’s a very important part of neighborliness.

A good neighbor was never (or rarely) loud, drunk, blasphemous, litigious, quarrelsome, abusive, violent, sexually incontinent, a gossip, or a scold. Violate these norms, and you could be subject to ostracism, which in this society could be fatal.

There were different ways of forcing people to toe the line. There were different ways of letting them know that they had violated the norms of the community. One way was to write little *squibs* (like graffiti) on their doors. I'll give you one example apparently involving a woman who had perhaps been too free in displaying various parts of her body:

Oh, hark awhile, and you shall know of a filthy beast did her breech show. And of her doing and how indeed, in this, her filth, she did proceed. And went and laid upon the ground, and tucked her coats (petticoats) about her round, and because she is so brave and fine, she tucked up her heels and said she would show moonshine.

There was “rough music:” People would gather underneath your windows and bang pots and pans—this is known as *charivari*—if you had violated some local norm. You might be “rode” out of town on a rail. This is called a *skimmington*. You might be “rode” out in effigy. If they were really serious about you, you'd be rode out quite literally.

Much of this was reserved for sexual behavior—cheating, overbearing or abusive wives, and cuckolded, henpecked, or abusive husbands were often treated to charivaris and squibs. This is a way for the community to say, “You have violated our sexual norms; conform or else.”

Only when public ridicule failed would neighbors turn to the courts—ecclesiastical, civil, or criminal. You didn't take going to the law lightly. That's part of being a good neighbor. You didn't just sue at the drop of a hat. A reputed scold might be brought to the JP—that was legal—but she was more likely to be dunked in the river. Property disputes and minor punch-ups might be taken to the borough or manor court, but first you might go to the local clergyman.

Only a notorious blasphemer or adulterer might be brought before a church court. If found guilty, he might be forced to do public penance, perhaps wearing a white robe—the color of penance—and standing with a lighted taper in the market square. Note the meeting of commerce and religion. Perhaps he might be forced to process in this garb from the square to the

church. In either case, the idea was public shame. You have violated the norms of the community; the community will now heap abuse on you.

The greatest penalty that could be inflicted on a person in the Early-modern English village—which could be inflicted by the local authorities, anyway—was probably excommunication. Excommunication isn't simply that you can't receive communion anymore, or you can't come to church anymore. You are thrown out of the community. "You're no longer a part of our community. Don't bother to try to borrow a rake. Don't bother to come to church. Don't ask us to watch your house. We won't do it."

Generally, good neighbors worked things out. Put another way, neighborliness—not the courts, not religion, not paternalism, and not deference—was the first line of defense against disorder.

Take the most dramatic breakdown of order in the Early-modern village, which I would argue was witchcraft. You might think that witchcraft was a religious crime. In fact, it was much more often a breakdown of neighborliness. Of all the things we think we know about Early-modern England, witchcraft may be the one most hedged about with legends, myth, stuff, and nonsense.

First, contrary to popular belief (a phrase which by now you've figured out I do dearly love), witchcraft accusations were extremely rare in medieval England. In fact, it only became a crime in 1542. The only times in England that there were really witch scares and massive prosecutions were the 1590s and the 1630s–1640s. Pay attention to those dates. You already know some of the significance of the 1590s: terrible famines. Second, witches were never burnt at the stake in England nor in Salem. The penalty was hanging.

Third, there was never a tradition in England that witches gathered in covens. Rather, the typical English witch was very much like our old woman from Lecture Twenty: She was old, single, and living alone, usually on the margins of poverty. That profile and the fact that witchcraft hit it big between 1580–1640 has suggested all sorts of interpretations to historians. One group thought for awhile that it had to do with the Puritans. But if you look carefully at the Puritans and what they write about the devil and witches,

they don't really fear them anymore than other Christians did. There's nothing specific there.

A more recent interpretation is that witchcraft prosecutions were aimed at suppressing women. After all, all the witches are women, and all the judges are men. The problem with this interpretation is that most of the accusers turn out to be women as well. This has led to a qualification of the feminist interpretation. It is that this is a society that forces women to compete with each other. One way to get an experienced—perhaps sexually experienced—woman out of the way was to accuse her of being a witch.

But why go after poor older women? Keith Thomas has suggested another more nuanced interpretation, which places witchcraft in the context of the Reformation and the socio-economic trends that we've been discussing, as well as neighborliness. He examined scores of witchcraft cases, and he noticed a certain pattern. Let's assume that we're following our little old woman through the village. One of the things that Keith Thomas noted was that accused and accusers almost always knew each other. What happened always went something like this:

Our little old woman in the 1590s is short of food. She knocks on one of her more prosperous neighbor's door. Remember that after the Reformation, there's much less pressure on that neighbor to actually give her some food, because good works don't get you into heaven. Remember that times are hard, which is one reason that she's going in the 1590s from door to door. They probably refuse her. As they refuse her, she wanders off. As she wanders off, she mutters something under her breath. It might be a curse, she might be talking about the weather, or she might be delirious.

Within days, weeks, months, or years, somebody dies, because in England somebody is always dying. Remember that since the Reformation, we don't really have saints to rely on to help us deal with these tragedies. We have to explain it, and the easiest explanation is that it was that old woman muttering under her breath. The sense of powerlessness and perhaps guilt at denial of charity, combined with an economy that was making lots of women poor, may explain the rise in witchcraft accusations at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

Thomas's interpretation is still being debated by historians, but what I like about it is that it ties together so many of the themes of this lecture: the power and importance of religious belief to explain the unexplainable; the precarious place of women in the local community; the narrowness and cruelty of which the Early-modern village is capable. Ultimately, in Thomas's interpretation, witchcraft accusation is a failure to be neighborly.

All of which suggests that if neighborliness was the first line of defense against disorder, it was a pretty fragile and porous line. This raises a number of questions about the village community. What if disagreements couldn't be worked out? What if religion failed to install conventional morality or good behavior? What happened when ordinary people refused to show deference, respect kin or, above all, get along with their neighbors?

In this lecture, we've examined how the world of Elizabethan and Jacobean English men and women was supposed to work. In the next lecture, we'll examine what happened when religion, deference, kinship, and neighborliness—and thus the community itself—broke down.

# Order and Disorder

## Lecture 24

**Contemporary observers were convinced that disorder, poverty, and crime were on the rise. They were worried that religion, paternalism, deference, kinship, and neighborliness could not hold back the rising tide—that their center could not hold. Knowing as we do the profound demographic and economic changes that England was experiencing during this period gives credence to all these fears. England was more disordered. Life was more uncertain in many ways in 1603 than it was in 1485.**

In 1603, English men and women still believed in the Great Chain of Being, but its links were subject to more strain than ever. The Chain began to experience ever greater political tensions. During the 1590s, the succession and even England's independent existence seemed insecure. Parliament was becoming more assertive, raising the question of its relationship to the king. As government grew in size and scope, increasing tensions arose between center and locality. The Chain also began to experience religious tensions. Catholics refused to accept the Church of England and, in some cases, Queen Elizabeth. Puritans demanded further reform, often refusing to conform to local practice. Finally, the Chain began to experience social and economic tensions. The political role of the nobility was changing. The gentry was growing in power and wealth. Merchants and professionals were also growing in wealth. Those below the level of yeomen were growing poorer. The poor were becoming more visible and, to some, more threatening.

The problem of poverty had grown during the early modern period. The economic fluctuations of the century after 1540 created numerous poor people and made them more visible. Increasing numbers of people experienced a decline in wealth thanks to rising prices and rents and stagnant wages. Many became migrants. They were thrown off the land by enclosure or an inability to pay their rents. They moved about searching for work. Overall, some 20,000–40,000 people were constantly on the move,

including the unemployed, demobilized soldiers, beggars, the sick and lame, and criminals.

Attitudes to the poor changed during the 16th century. Medieval Catholics looked with favor on the poor. It was widely believed that the poor were protected by God in this world and would be saved in the next. The poor gave Catholics an excuse to perform good works, which might lead to their own salvation. Early modern Protestants feared the poor. Their numbers were becoming unmanageable. They were thought to move about the country in lawless, masterless bands. They were widely perceived as potential or actual criminals.

As we have seen, the Poor Law of 1536 divided the poor into the deserving and the undeserving. The deserving poor included women, children, the aged, the lame, the sick, and the halt. Tudor legislation sought to help these people: The 1536 Poor Law authorized local communities to raise taxes—the poor rates—to provide relief for the poor. Acts of 1563 and 1572 made these taxes compulsory.

They were collected by churchwardens and distributed by overseers of the poor. They were administered and awarded by the local JP. The Acts of 1572, 1598, and 1601 also authorized the erection of workhouses where the poor could be made useful, the erection of public housing for the poor, and the provision of schooling and apprenticeships for poor children.

The undeserving poor, or “sturdy beggars,” were able-bodied men who did not work. Because contemporaries did not understand the workings of economics, they assumed that these men refused to work. Tudor legislation sought to punish these people. As early as 1495, Parliament ordered beggars to be placed in the stocks for three days, whipped, and sent back to their home villages. In 1547, Parliament decreed that able-bodied poor were to be branded with a “V” for vagrant, enslaved for two years, and put to death on a third offense. This proved unenforceable and was soon repealed. A 1572 law

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ordered boring through the ear on a first offence, condemnation as a felon for a second, and hanging for a third. This was spottily enforced; capital punishment for vagrancy was repealed only in 1593.

The Act of Settlement of 1662 made it easier to deny poor relief by requiring those seeking it to do so in the parish of their birth. The Poor Law was often cruel and always inefficient. In the end, everything was left up to the generosity of individual JPs and parishes. Some historians think that private charity did more good, especially in the endowment of schools and hospitals. But others point out that the poor rates got many people through hard winters, especially the working poor. The Poor Law deserves credit as the first attempt at large-scale government relief since Roman times. Its existence may help to explain why England weathered the famines of the 1590s and 1620s without major peasant revolts, as in France. To this degree, paternalism worked.

What happened when religion, paternalism, neighborliness, the Poor Law, and even order itself broke down entirely? As with poverty, many people in early modern England thought that crime was on the rise throughout the period. In fact, we can tell from criminal court records that felonies were on the rise through the 1620s, then fell sharply. Four types of crime particularly worried English magistrates:

- Violent crime (including murder, assault, rape, and infanticide) was rare in England, less than 5 percent of all indictments.
- Theft accounted for three-quarters of assize court prosecutions—perhaps a result of the state of the economy. Theft of goods above the value of one shilling (*very* roughly a day's wage for a working man) was punishable by death.
- Moral crimes, which particularly incensed Puritans, included blasphemy and breaking the Sabbath, keeping an unlicensed alehouse, scolding, fornication, adultery, and witchcraft. Accusations for this crime peaked early in the 17th century, probably as a result of poor economic conditions leading to increasing tensions in the village.

- Riots may be divided into four types: riots against some unpopular ethnic or religious group, calendar riots (around a particular holiday), food or enclosure riots, and political demonstrations. Generally, these were not punished severely. The ruling elite knew that it was outnumbered and that it had to allow people to let off steam.

The court system was complicated and allowed wide latitude to plaintiffs. There were numerous courts with overlapping jurisdictions, including King's Bench (for criminal cases in which the Crown was involved); Common Pleas (a civil court of the common law); Chancery (a court of equity); assizes (a circuit court to try major felonies); quarter sessions (presided over by JPs, held four times a year, generally for non-capital felonies); petty sessions (presided over by JPs, held every few weeks for lesser crimes); church courts (for moral offenses); borough courts (for minor offenses committed in town); and manorial courts (for minor offenses and disputes on the manor).

The steps taken when a felony had been committed were as follows:

- The victim raised “the hue and cry” and called the constable (a voluntary local official; there was no police force), who sought to apprehend the perpetrator and who reported to the JP.
- The JP then investigated, interrogated witnesses, and if appropriate, made out an arrest warrant.
- The constable formally arrested the accused (in theory).
- The victim (not the state) now decided whether or not to prosecute or drop the matter.
- If the victim prosecuted, the case was sent to a Grand Jury.
- If the Grand Jury agreed, the accused was indicted.
- At trial, a jury decided on guilt or innocence; the judge decided on punishment.

- If found guilty, the defendant might still be pardoned by the king.

As a result of the discretion allowed at each step, less than 10 percent of accused felons actually went to the scaffold.

The English legal system was seen by contemporaries as a bulwark against disorder. Some later historians have seen it as a tool by which the privileged elite kept the masses in line. In fact, both sides used the threat of violence more than actual violence to jockey for position. Perhaps one might say that early modern England was characterized by ordered disorder. ■

### Suggested Reading

Bucholz and Key, *Early Modern England*, chap. 6, secs. 8–9.

Manning, *Village Revolts*.

Palliser, *Age of Elizabeth*, chap. 10.

Sharpe, *Crime in Early Modern England*.

Slack, *From Reformation to Improvement*.

Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*.

Wrightson, *English Society*, chap. 6.

### Questions to Consider

1. Why did early-modern people divide the poor into the deserving and the undeserving? Does this distinction make sense in light of what we know about the workings of economics? Do we still make it today?
2. Given their profound fear of disorder, why did upper-class judges and JPs treat rioters so leniently? Is there a distinction between riot and rebellion?

# Order and Disorder

## Lecture 24—Transcript

Throughout this course, we have emphasized the Early-modern obsession with order, in particular the Great Chain of Being. In the last lecture, we learnt that order was highly dependent on community. All along it should have been obvious that these two concepts were always fragile and under threat, especially toward the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup>.

Certainly, contemporary observers were convinced that disorder, poverty, and crime were on the rise. They were worried that religion, paternalism, deference, kinship, and neighborliness could not hold back the rising tide—that their center could not hold. Knowing as we do the profound demographic and economic changes that England was experiencing during this period gives credence to all these fears. England was more disordered. Life was more uncertain in many ways in 1603 than it was in 1485.

In this lecture, we will examine those social attitudes and institutions that were designed to kick in when order was threatened by poverty, crime, riot, etc. In every case, the results were, at best, mixed.

English men and women still believed in the Great Chain of Being in 1603, but its links were subject to more strain than ever. The Chain began to experience ever-greater political tensions. We've seen some of this during the 1590s, when the succession and even England's independent existence seemed insecure as Spain threatened both. Parliament was becoming more assertive, raising the question of its relationship to the monarch. As government grew in size and scope, increasing tensions would arise between center and locality.

The Chain also began to experience increasing religious tensions. We saw this in Lectures Seventeen and Twenty-Three. Catholics refused to accept the Church of England and, in some cases, Queen Elizabeth herself. Puritans demanded further reform, often refusing to conform to local practice. Clergy were underpaid and overworked. Ordinary parishioners acquiesced, but didn't necessarily internalize the message from the pulpit.

Finally, as we saw in Lecture Twenty, the Chain began to experience social and economic tensions. The political role of the nobility was changing. The gentry were growing in power and wealth. Merchants and professionals were also growing in wealth and status, and those below yeomen were growing poorer. The poor themselves were becoming more visible and more threatening. I'd like to begin with them, in part because they're the most visible manifestation of a breakdown of the Chain.

Poverty had grown during the later Elizabethan period, like homelessness in this country in the 1980s, to be more visible to Early-modern people. The economic fluctuations of the century after 1540 created more poor people than ever before in England. Let's put some numbers on this. By the end of the Tudor period, between 10–20 percent of the population, depending on the current state of the economy, was unable to meet expenses out of income. Many became migrants. They were thrown off the land by enclosure or an inability to pay their rents. They moved about searching for work. About a third of the town population in England during this period was itinerant. At any given time, there were all these people moving in and moving out.

Overall, some 20,000–40,000 people were constantly on the move, including the unemployed, demobilized soldiers, beggars, the sick, sometimes the lame, and criminals. Farm laborers were guaranteed to be unemployed at change of season. That is they tended to have steady work in the spring during planting and especially in the fall during harvest. The rest of the year, they were as itinerant as the Joads in *The Grapes of Wrath*—and every bit as popular with the respectable classes.

Worse, the increasing numbers of poor made them more visible, just as society's attitude toward them was shifting. Attitudes to the poor changed during the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Basically, the medieval Catholic worldview embraced the poor as a natural part of the Great Chain of Being. The Early-modern Protestant worldview did not. Medieval Catholics looked with favor—and even a degree of affection—on the poor. It was widely believed that the poor were protected by God in this world and would be saved in the next. The poor gave Catholics an excuse to perform good works, which might lead to their salvation, by giving alms and endowing hospitals, schools, and monasteries.

Perhaps another reason for this attitude was that the number of poor people in the Middle Ages seemed to be manageable. You'll remember the end of the Middle Ages is the golden age of labor. There weren't that many unemployed people and, as a result, the numbers of poor were not overwhelming.

Early-modern Protestants feared the poor. Their numbers were becoming unmanageable, and their presence seemed to be everywhere. They were thought to move about the country in lawless, masterless bands. They were widely perceived as potential or actual criminals. Indeed, the migrant poor often did resort certainly to vagrancy, begging, and theft—all of which were on the books as crimes in Early-modern England.

Because no one understood the vast demographic and economic forces that were gripping England at the time, it was widely assumed that apart from the old, the lame, and the sick, these people were poor by their own choice. They simply refused to work. I think we've all had the experience of looking toward someone less fortunate than us and saying, "Why don't they just get a job like me?" That I think is a very natural and common reaction, and it is certainly one that explains a lot of the policy towards the poor in Early-modern England.

Thus, the first Poor Law of 1536 divided the poor into the deserving and the undeserving. The deserving, or "impotent," poor included women, children, the aged, the lame, the sick, and the halt. Tudor legislation sought to help these people, but not unconditionally. The 1536 Poor Law authorized local communities to raise voluntary subscriptions to provide relief to the poor—in other words, "You can do this if you want." Most communities did not want.

The Acts of 1563 and 1572 made those subscriptions compulsory taxes. These became known as the "poor rates." They were administered and awarded by the local JP. Once distributed, these funds were known as "outdoor relief," because the poor could remain in their own houses.

Many contemporaries objected to these handouts, arguing that the poor should pay something back to the community. This is going to be bad news for our old woman in the 1590s. An Act of 1572 authorized the erection

of workhouses to give indoor relief. These are also sometimes called “bridewells” because the most famous example was built in London.

Here the poor could be made useful. They could spin wool, hemp, and flax. They would work iron. They would split stone for the building trade. This is not meant to be stimulating work.

In these workhouses, families were broken up, separated by age and gender. The idea was to prevent the procreation of additional poor people, but also to remove children from the bad influence of their parents, who had obviously failed to raise them to be good members of the community and the Great Chain of Being. This doesn’t mean that a whole lot of thought was given to the sort of influence that would now be exercised on these children by others.

The overall idea was to give the poor a usable skill, to get them to pay for their own relief with their work, but above all to make going to the workhouse as unpleasant as possible. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, individual parishes would often seek to band together to form unions, so that they wouldn’t all have to pay for an individual workhouse. These became the famous union workhouses that you may have read about in 19<sup>th</sup> century literature.

They weren’t much better in the 17<sup>th</sup> century in terms of how they treated people. If you’ve read this literature, you probably have some idea of what I’m going to say. According to one contemporary, “A thousand to one if he or she come to any preferment having a taste of that soil.” Because the poor are thrown in with pickpockets and prostitutes, another said, “Nothing is to be learned but lewdness of that generation.”

The Act of 1572 also authorized the erection of public housing for the poor. This would be a break for our poor widow. It also provisioned schooling and apprenticeships for poor children. Even this altruistic aim was frustrated. For example, take the apprenticeship system; it’s very much like the English military system. That is to say, the master would take the money from the community in a lump sum with which he was supposed to support and train the apprentice. By the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, it becomes very clear that what was happening was that people were taking the money, and then they were

reducing these apprentices to virtual slavery or worse. Apprentices died in the care of their masters.

Finally, the Act of Settlement of 1662 made it easier to deny poor relief because it required those who sought it to do so in the parish of their birth. Stop and think about this problem. We've talked about the poor as being migratory. They're roaming around the country. Some of them are very long-distance migrants: They're going to London from the North or the West Country, and now they've got to get back to the parish of their birth to seek poor relief.

Here's another problem. Suppose you're an illiterate peasant. How are you ever going to prove that that's your parish? Sure, your name might be in the parish register, but it's really up to the church warden, JP, and local officials to help you point your finger to that name. There were many parishes that were inordinately generous, but there were also parishes that were notorious for denying relief to the poor.

Remember, we've been talking about the deserving poor. What about the undeserving poor? What about what contemporaries called "sturdy beggars?" These are people who according to contemporary economic theory do no work because they refuse: "There'd be jobs for them if they wanted them."

Tudor legislation sought to punish these people. As early as 1495, Parliament ordered beggars to be placed in the stocks for three days, whipped, and sent back to their home villages. In 1547, Parliament decreed that any able-bodied man or woman found not working for three days was to be branded with a "V" for vagrant, enslaved for two years, and put to death on the third offense. By the way, that legislation came out of the Parliament of Protector Somerset, who's supposed to be a good guy about social legislation. Fortunately, nobody enforced this. It proved unworkable and was repealed.

However, the 1572 law that we talked about earlier ordered whipping and boring through the ear for a first offense, condemnation as a felon for a second, and hanging for a third. Again, many communities refused to enforce, but some did. Between 1572 and 1575, the JPs of Middlesex, London's county, branded 44 vagrants, set eight to service, and hanged five.



Capital punishment for vagrancy was only repealed in 1593. Obviously, the Poor Law was often cruel and always inefficient.

In the end, everything was left up to the generosity of individual JPs and parishes. Some were remarkably generous to the unfortunate, becoming havens to them. Others used the Act of Settlement and other laws to drive the poor out of their backyards. The concept of NIMBY [Not In My Back Yard] is not one that is limited solely to ourselves.

Some historians think that private charity actually did more good. I want to be careful not to overemphasize this notion that because good works went out for salvation that people didn't do good works. Of course they did. It was an important plank of Protestant theology that the elect, in particular, would be known as the elect because they would do good things. There was a lot of private charity, establishing almshouses, schools, and hospitals—many of which are still going in England.

Others would point out that for all their inefficiencies and sometimes cruelty, the poor rates did get many people through hard winters, especially the working poor. If our old woman is going to survive, it's probably going to be because of the Poor Law. Recent research indicates that the Poor Law really did work in the sense that most of its recipients were not habitual poor, but people who needed to be tided over for a brief period of time and never went back on the poor rates. By the way, most contemporaries didn't know that. That's what we now know as historians.

Most recipients were neighbors in good standing who just needed a little help. At this local level, the Poor Law was another manifestation of neighborliness.

At the national level, I think the Poor Law deserves some credit. It's the first large-scale attempt at government relief since Roman times. Every other government in Europe leaves the relief of poverty to the churches. Some historians have argued that the existence of the Poor Law may help to explain why England weathered those terrible famines of the 1590s and 1620s without major rioting or rebellion as was taking place in France. To this degree, paternalism and the Tudor Revolution in government worked.

What happened when they didn't work at all? When religion, paternalism, neighborliness, the Poor Law, and even order itself broke down entirely, how did Early-modern English men and women define, combat, and cope with crime?

As with poverty, many people in Early-modern England were convinced that crime was on the rise throughout the period. Of course, you're not going to be surprised if I tell you that it is impossible to calculate crime rates in the way that we are able to for our society given the state of contemporary records. We can tell a lot, however, from criminal court records. For one thing, we know there are more indictments steadily through the 1620s. Then, they fall sharply to the end of this course and keep going down, down, and down. As you'll see, that may have something to do with what's going to happen to the economy and population of England later on in this course.

Of course, there's always a dark figure of crimes that didn't get reported or indicted, so we have to be careful with these numbers. But in this case, the widespread perception that crime was on the rise seems accurate.

There were four types of crime that particularly worried English magistrates. I'm going to spend most of the bulk of the rest of this lecture on each of the four types in turn. First, pride of place must go to violent crime. Contemporary Europeans were convinced that Englishmen were among the most hotheaded and violent of people in Europe. The English had this contemporary reputation. In fact, if you look at the indictments and the legal records—murder, assault, rape, and infanticide were all rare in England, less than five percent of all indictments and declining as the period wore on. Of course, rape and infanticide may simply have been underreported.

We can tell from a lot of other contemporary documents that most violence in England was spontaneous, not premeditated. It was painful, not fatal. It centered around drinking and gambling. It usually involved blows rather than a fatal wound. Remember, in some ways this society is programmed for spontaneous violence. Remember that gestures and titles of address matter a lot. Aristocrats are always defending their honor. They always carry swords. It's one of the signs of being gentle—you carry a sword. Workmen carry tools.

The crime that really worried contemporaries was theft. It accounts for three-quarters of all assize court prosecutions. With good reason given the state of the economy, theft was again on the rise up to the mid-1620s. The constant war between the haves and the want-to-haves hasn't changed much since the 17<sup>th</sup> century. For example, on 28 January 1663, Samuel Pepys came home to find:

My wife come home and seeming to cry, for bringing home in a coach her new ferrandin waistcoat. In Cheapside, a man asked her whether that was the way to the Tower. While she was answering him, another on the other side snatched away her bundle out of her lap and could not be recovered but ran away with it, which vexes me cruelly, but it cannot be helped.

Parliament disagreed. They thought it could be helped. Theft of goods above the value of one shilling was a capital crime. One shilling is little more than a workman's wage. The number of capital crimes associated with theft was rising all the time, but as you'll see at the end of this lecture, that doesn't mean that lots of people were hanged. The laws were on the books, and they were useful as examples, but as we'll see, things were worked out amongst neighbors to a remarkable degree.

The third type of crime that worried contemporaries was moral crimes, which particularly incensed Puritans. This included recusancy, blasphemy, breaking the Sabbath, drunkenness, keeping an unlicensed alehouse, scolding, illegal begging, vagrancy, fornication, adultery, bastard-bearing, and witchcraft, which we talked about in the last lecture.

The number of statutes designed to regulate personal behavior skyrocketed between 1550 and 1650. I'd like to take just one example, that of alehouses. Ale, as you know and as I believe I may have mentioned I demonstrated in a number of experiments at Oxford, is easily brewed at home. Therefore, almost anyone could turn their house into an alehouse or a public house (or, if you will, a "pub"). By a government survey of 1577, there were some 15,000 alehouses in the country. By 1630, times being rough, there were twice as many.

Alehouses played a very important social role in the community. After the Protestant reformers banned wakes, wedding receptions, and church ales from the churchyard, this is where they went, but with an important difference. Whereas the local aristocrat—the landlord—might turn up at a wake or wedding reception in the churchyard, he’s never going to turn up at an alehouse. Remember, we talked about that distancing between the upper classes and the lower orders? Here’s another example of something that the upper classes don’t do anymore.

By the way, I need to distinguish here between taverns, which serve food and wine (as did inns) and alehouses, which just serve that plebian drink, beer. The reason no respectable gentleman would enter an alehouse was that alehouses were thought to be notorious centers of drinking, music making, dancing, gambling, prostitution, fencing of stolen goods, and the violence and disorder associated with such activities.

Worst of all, the alehouse allowed for the gathering of all sorts of common folk without the supervision of their betters. That meant the potential for disorder, rebellion, and even riot. Thus, Christopher Hudson opined in 1631, “Alehouses are the nests of Satan, where the owls of impiety lurk and where all evil is hatched.” William Vaughn wrote in 1611, “Here breed conspiracies, combinations, common conjurations, detractions, defamations.”

The government tried to regulate them but it didn’t work. A survey of 40 townships in Worcestershire in the 1630s shows that there were 81 licensed alehouses, but 52 that were unlicensed. A survey of Lancashire in 1647 shows 83 legal licensed alehouses and 143 unlicensed.

Why didn’t this work? JPs had a lot on their plate and a lot of other things to worry about, like the price of grain, murder, and various other problems. Also, not everyone was a Puritan. Here’s a case where the local community decides, “We don’t like this law. We like to drink. We’re not going to obey this law.” As with Prohibition in the 1920s, a law that the local community does not subscribe to is an unenforceable law. Eventually, the government stopped trying to license alehouses.

Finally, the whole village might transgress en masse in a riot. This is the fourth type of crime. Riots may themselves be divided up into four types. There were riots against unpopular ethnic or religious groups. I think today we would call this a “race riot.” For example, on 13 July 1618, a crowd of 4,000–5,000 besieged the Spanish ambassador’s house in London after one of his servants accidentally ran down a child in Chancery Lane. Remember how the English feel about the Spaniards? Here a Spanish coach had run down a child. The rumor was that the child had died. It wasn’t true, but it led to a terrible riot.

There were calendar riots. For example, traditionally apprentice boys in London always rioted on Shrove Tuesday, the day before Ash Wednesday, attacking brothels and theaters. I wonder how they knew where the brothels and theaters were? These riots were large. They involved hundreds and even thousands of young men. They were very specific. They only attacked the brothel and the theater, and they were highly ritualized. There were posters. There were ribbons that people wore.

There were food or enclosure riots. This is the third type of riot. Usually in times of dearth, these were usually begun by women who knew well the price of bread. It’s women who put the food on the table ultimately. These riots were specifically directed against middlemen. That’s an interesting point. Contemporary ordinary people didn’t usually blame the landlord. They couldn’t look up the economic scale and say, “Ultimately, it’s his fault that I don’t have bread on the table.”

They blamed the miller, who was charging too much to grind the grain. They blamed the baker—the middleman. Of course, the baker might have had to pay a whole lot of his own in terms of overhead, but they didn’t understand that. These riots too were highly ritualized. There was lots of marching, burnings in effigy, “rough music,” and in the case of enclosure riots, they would pull down fences as a symbol.

Finally, there were political demonstrations. We saw some political demonstrations at Westminster in 1601 about monopolies. We’ll see a lot during the 1640s as Crown and Parliament increasingly clash.

The surprising thing about a riot is that generally it wasn't punished terribly severely. Given what you've learned about the Tudor state and the power of the ruling elite, you're bound to ask, "Why not?" First, usually rioters, unlike rebels, didn't threaten the social order itself. They usually had one particular goal: "We want the price of grain to be lowered this week." Often times, not only did they not attack authority, they would wave proclamations or statements by the JP. They'd get a piece of paper saying, "You promised that the price of grain would stay at this level."

Instead of attacking authority, they think that they're working on the side of authority. These riots were usually non-violent and the point seems to have been not so much to do unrestricted mayhem, but to remind those at the top, "1) you have a responsibility to take care of us, and 2) we outnumber you, so you'd better do something about this. Look at all these people here."

Interestingly enough, the ruling elite know that, and they seem to have realized the need not to put pressure on people in that kind of a situation. Riots were often gotten away with.

What happened if somebody committed a crime? What happened if our little old woman was the victim of having something stolen from her window? Or perhaps she herself is accused of a crime? I'd like to talk about this because I think it will get at some of our preconceptions about what Early-modern life was like.

The steps taken when a felony had been committed were different from those in our legal system. First, if there were no fatalities, you, the victim, had the choice of whether to report the crime or not. If you didn't report it, nothing happened. One of the fundamental differences in their system was that there was no district attorney. There's no sense in which the state has an interest in prosecuting somebody for theft.

If the victim raises "the hue and cry"—literally starts yelling and calling out to his or her neighbors—the neighbors would come out and try to apprehend the perpetrator and so would the local constable. That sounds very impressive, except that there's no police force in this society. The local constable is a volunteer. He's another one of your neighbors. If you were

lucky, the perpetrator was caught. There weren't many places to run, but you could always leave the village.

The "perp" was then brought to the JP, who investigated the victim, the accused, and the witnesses. If he agreed that a crime had been committed, then he makes out a warrant for the formal arrest by the constable of the accused. At this point, the accused is "bound over" (held) until an indictment can be drawn up and sent to the Grand Jury.

The Grand Jury is made up of local gentlemen, yeomen, and substantial people in the community. They'll listen to the charge. If they think there's a possibility of a crime, they will go along and they will return an indictment. They don't have to. One of the themes of this part of the lecture that I want to emphasize is that at every moment the community can intervene and say, "We don't think justice is being carried out here." The indictment could undervalue the goods and say, "He didn't steal a shilling's worth, he stole six pence worth." Then, you wouldn't be liable for a capital crime, or, of course, they can choose not to return an indictment.

If an indictment is returned, and if this is a crime that involves a capital offense, then a trial is held at the assizes, which take place twice a year in a big rural jurisdiction in a big market town. There, a petty jury—that is, made up of ordinary yeomen and townsmen—will decide on guilt or innocence. The popular image of what happens in these trials—if you think back to when you've seen trials from the Early-modern period in films—it's always that the cards are stacked against the poor defendant. You maybe have an image of a judge in a full-bottom wig (though full-bottom wigs don't come in until the late 17<sup>th</sup> century) almost always sending these people to be hanged.

In fact, that's not what actually happened. The jury had a lot of discretion, and there were also a lot of loopholes. For example, there was "benefit of clergy." As you may know, during the Middle Ages, clergy were not subject to capital punishment. If you wanted to get out of being hanged and you were a clergyman, you demonstrated that you knew how to read, because only the clergy in the Middle Ages knew how to read. You were literally forced to read a Psalm from the Bible—Psalm 51.

This loophole remained on the books into the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Anyone who could read Psalm 51 could plead that they were a cleric and so be absolved of having to be hanged, though you were still subject to other penalties. Psalm 51 became known as the “neck verse.”

You could also plead your belly if you were a woman. You could plead that you were pregnant. Even this society will not hang a pregnant woman. That would buy you some months. In most cases, it actually got you off. It got you either transported or out of prison.

Of course, the jury could always acquit on the evidence. Many juries were inclined to do so. According to the Somerset JP Edward Hext, “Most commonly, the simple countrymen and women are of opinion that they would not procure a man’s death for all the goods in the world.” In fact, according to one sample of three counties, less than 60 percent of those indicted were actually convicted.

If found guilty, the defendant might still escape the noose. He might be spared by the judge. Some 20–30 percent of those convicted in the above sample were spared. He might be pardoned by the king or after 1650, transported to the colonies. Note that in two of these three cases, the ruling elite emphasizes its mercy. That’s the point that I think I’d like to emphasize as I finish.

As a result of all this discretion by the community and all these different steps, less than ten percent of accused felons actually went to the scaffold. My point is here are these terrible laws on the books emphasizing the power of the law and that we can hang you for stealing a shilling’s worth of goods, and yet less than 10 percent of those accused are actually hanged. What’s going on here?

I think the same thing that’s going on in riots. There are two groups in this society: the haves and the have-nots; the rich and the poor; the two percent and the 98 percent. What they’re saying to each other is, “We have the potential to take away your lives, your property, and your power.” The rioters are saying that by their numbers: “We have numbers on our side. We can come to your country house. We can take away all that lovely porcelain.”



The ruling class is saying, “We have the laws on the books. We can hang you for stealing that bolt of cloth.”

They usually don't do it, so you should see English society during this period of time as a kind of a dance—a sort of ordered disorder in which both groups are constantly threatening each other. It's up to you if you want to see this as sort of Merry Old England, placid, rural, or as a society that is constantly feeling that tension between the two percent and the 98 percent.

What would happen if you didn't like any of this. You didn't like the village life, and you didn't like the neighborliness. You had an alternative. If you didn't fit into the Great Chain of Being at all, you could always go to town. That's what we're going to do in the next lecture.

# Towns, Trade, and Colonization

## Lecture 25

**Towns had their own separate chains of command and social hierarchies. These were based not on land or birth, but on mercantile and professional wealth. Theoretically, this hierarchy was more open than its rural counterpart because fortunes fluctuated. In other words, towns were supposed to be places of opportunity where you could rise from relatively humble beginnings. At least that was the myth.**

If one found village life too confining or insufficiently gainful, one could always go to town. By 1550, some 10 percent of the English and Welsh population lived in towns of more than 2,000 inhabitants. These towns may be divided into three types, in descending order of magnitude: London, with 60,000 people; provincial capitals, with perhaps, 7,000–10,000 people, such as York in the North, Norwich in East Anglia, and Bristol and Exeter in the West Country; and cathedral, market, and county towns, with about 1,000 people (but swelling when a fair or the assizes came to town), such as Worcester in Worcestershire, Rye in Sussex, and Salisbury in Hampshire. All these towns were closely linked with the countryside: Yeomen and husbandmen brought their grain to sell. Minor nobles and gentry came to muster the militia or to attend the assizes. Their sons came to attend school.

But towns had their own separate chains of command and social hierarchies, based not on birth or land but on mercantile and professional wealth. Theoretically, this hierarchy was more open than its rural counterpart as fortunes fluctuated, but in practice, the same families tended to maintain their control through intermarriage, nepotism, and other means. At the top of any town would be the mayor (in London, a lord mayor). Below him was a group of aldermen. Together with the mayor, they comprised the corporation and wielded most of the political power. They administered civic government, maintained order, and made local ordinances. Below them came citizens or freemen, that is, members of the local guild. The guild set prices, wages, and standards of quality for all merchants and tradesmen in the town. Its members could set up in a trade. They voted in municipal elections and, in some boroughs, for the MP. Below them came everybody else. As migrants

flooded into town during this period, it became harder for the guild to maintain control. This enabled non-members to practice their trades.

The period 1540–1640 was a difficult one for most towns. The dissolution of the monasteries hurt business. The increasing centralization of the wool industry and rise of London as England’s main port took business from smaller towns. The stagnation of the international wool trade hurt both ports and cloth towns.

English trade at the end of the Tudor period may be divided into wool and everything else. Wool had long been England’s most lucrative commodity, consisting of three-quarters of the nation’s foreign trade in general. Increasingly, English merchants shipped finished wool cloth, not raw wool, to Europe. Shepherds and small farmers kept sheep in the countryside. Their wives sheered the sheep in spring, carded and spun the wool, and wove the cloth for extra money. The wool cloth was then purchased by a wool factor, who sold it to a great merchant. Such merchants sold the finished wool cloth abroad, usually through London to Antwerp.

By 1550, the monopoly of the wool trade had been wrested from the German merchants of the Hanseatic League by the London-based Merchant Adventurers. The Merchant Adventurers were fabulously wealthy international merchants. Most Elizabethan lords mayor and aldermen of London were Merchant Adventurers. As a result, they were very important to the government as potential creditors and as guarantors of order in the capital, hence, the granting of their monopoly. After 1568, however, Antwerp was frequently closed to English traders by disease and the Wars of Religion, culminating in the Thirty Years’ War (1618–1648). This, combined with overproduction, led the wool trade to stagnate and, in some years, decline.

The English merchants reacted in three ways. They produced more wool, flooding the market. They developed new, lighter fabrics, called the “new draperies.” Finally, they turned to other trades and industries: tin-mining in Cornwall, coal-mining around Newcastle and Nottinghamshire, and shipbuilding along the Thames. The English government sought to encourage the development of other markets. It chartered monopolistic trading companies to other areas: the Muscovy Company (for Russia) in 1555; the

Spanish Company in 1577; the Eastland Company (for the Baltic) in 1579; the Turkey (later Levant) Company in 1581; the Senegal Adventurers (later Royal Africa) Company in 1588; the East India Company in 1600; the Virginia Company in 1606; and the Massachusetts Bay Company in 1629.

The early companies were intended to open up these markets to English wool, but they actually made their profits out of importing silks, tea, spices, and medicines from India and the Levant; timber and naval stores from the Baltic; and human beings shipped to the Americas from Africa. Later companies were founded for other purposes. The Virginia Company was intended to mine gold. The Massachusetts Bay Company was intended to provide an economic and religious alternative to life in England. Each of these monopolies did more for the individual merchants who were its members and the court favorites who secured their charters than for the economy overall.

An alternative was to find new routes to the wealth of the East or to found new trading colonies. The most lucrative trading system in the world was the Spanish-Portuguese Empire, which was closed to English traders. After Spain annexed Portugal in the 1580s, it controlled all the gold and silver mines of Central and South America. It also controlled nearly all the southern routes to the lucrative trade with the Far East. The rest were controlled by the Dutch. The English Crown responded by attempting to seek new routes to the East and establish new colonies of its own. But England started out too late and was poorly placed, geographically, to find a new trade route to the East or to establish colonies in Central and South America.

As we have seen, English attempts to break into the Spanish trade with Central and South America resulted in war and failure. This left only the bleak eastern coast of North America. The earliest English attempts at colonization, such as that on Roanoke Island in the 1580s, also failed. The first successful English colony was founded at Jamestown, Virginia, in 1607.

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**England started out too late and was poorly placed, geographically, to find a new trade route to the East or to establish colonies in Central and South America.**

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The purpose of the venture was to mine gold. When no gold was found, the earliest colonists proved incapable of growing crops or getting along with the Native American population. The colony only hit its economic stride in the 1620s when it discovered a marketable commodity (tobacco) and a cheap source of labor (African slaves). By 1635, Jamestown and its environs had a population of 35,000, but the colony was bankrupt. This led the Crown to step in and assume control of Virginia.

The colonization of Massachusetts began with the Plymouth settlement on Cape Cod in 1620 on the Virginia Company charter. In 1629, the much larger Massachusetts Bay Company was chartered. These settlements were founded, not so much as a source of easy wealth, but to provide an alternative to the Poor Law for indigent Englishmen and to provide a refuge for those Puritans who could not conform to the Church of England. Their relations with the native population were generally good, and they survived. The Massachusetts Bay Colony absorbed the Plymouth settlement in 1691. Puritan intolerance eventually drove Roger Williams to found Rhode Island as a haven for a wider variety of Protestants, as well as Jews. In 1632, George Calvert, Lord Baltimore, founded Maryland. Later in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, it became a haven for Catholics.

The English colonies of the New World had limited commercial or military value. But, like English cities, they were an increasingly important safety valve for those who could neither abide nor prosper in Anglican village society. By 1642, some 60,000 people had crossed the Atlantic to found an English society in North America. ■

### Suggested Reading

Bucholz and Key, *Early Modern England*, chap. 6, secs. 10–11.

Clark and Slack, *English Towns in Transition*.

Loades, *England's Maritime Empire*.

MacFarlane, *The British in the Americas*.

Palliser, *Age of Elizabeth*, chaps. 7–9.

## Questions to Consider

1. How was town life different from country life? How similar?
2. Why did the English join the exploration bandwagon so late?

# Towns, Trade, and Colonization

## Lecture 25—Transcript

In the last few lectures, we've examined life in the Early-modern village. We have found that that life was often hard and spare, and lived very much under the watchful gaze of the local landlord and the local clergyman, as well as one's neighbors. Remember that the average English village had maybe 1–100 inhabitants. That was one very good reason to go to the pub: at least you could escape two of them, but of course you'd be under the watchful eye of the other 298.

As we've seen, village life was subject to a whole series of laws and less formal rules that were designed to produce good subjects and good neighbors. What if you didn't fit into village society? What if its economic, social, and religious relationships just didn't work for you or were too confining? There were alternative economic and social structures in—or connected to—Early-modern England. Today, we will examine two of them: towns and overseas colonies.

The medieval Germans had a saying: “*Stadtluft macht frei*” (“city air makes one free”). If you found village life too confining or insufficiently gainful, you could always go to town. Urban dwellers still represented a small fraction of the general population—still around 10 percent in 1550, but beginning to grow. The population of England that lived in these towns of over 2,000 inhabitants was just beginning to expand during our period of time, in part because of migration from the countryside due to the high inflation and conditions we described earlier.

As before, I'd like to divide these towns into three types. There was London with about 60,000. London is always unique. London is so much larger than any other English town, and it presents so many opportunities, that I would like to save it for the next lecture.

Just below this, there are provincial capitals with between perhaps 10,000 to (increasingly in our period) maybe as many as 13,000 people. I refer to York in the North, Norwich in East Anglia, and Bristol and Exeter in the West Country. I've added Exeter to our list of big provincial towns. These

cities had complex economies. They might engage in truly national trade or even international trade as the period wore on, though increasingly they were losing out to London in terms of the wool trade.

Below them were cathedral and market towns with maybe 1,000 people, but swelling when a fair or the assizes came to town. I mean towns like Worcester in Worcestershire, Rye in Sussex, and Salisbury in Hampshire. All of these towns were closely linked with the countryside. You shouldn't think of a very stark urban rural divide. Yeomen and husbandmen came to them to sell their grain. Their families would often visit and enjoy themselves during a fair. Minor nobles and gentry came to muster the militia or to attend the assizes, when the town would swell. Their sons came to attend school. These towns were closely linked to the rural Chain of Being, even if they were not really part of it.

Towns had their own separate chains of command and social hierarchies. These were based not on land or birth, but on mercantile and professional wealth. Theoretically, this hierarchy was more open than its rural counterpart because fortunes fluctuated. In other words, towns were supposed to be places of opportunity where you could rise from relatively humble beginnings. At least that was the myth.

Take the famous story of Dick Whittington. According to legend, Richard Whittington was a poor but industrious apprentice boy who rose to be Lord Mayor of London through hard work, pluck, and luck. I know of two versions of the story. One version is that after spending seven years as an apprentice and a scullion (a kitchen servant) and finding no work in London, young Whittington was leaving town dejected when, at the crest of Highgate Hill, he heard the bells of St. Mary-le-Bow—Bow bells—calling his name: “Turn again, Whittington, Lord Mayor of London,” which he did and he was.

Another version of the story is that he was sent abroad to trade with a Turkish pasha and was given nothing to trade with, or at least had nothing the pasha was interested in, so he offered the pasha his cat. The cat was so effective a mouser that the pasha rewarded Whittington with a fortune. In either case, DW ends up as Lord Mayor of London.



It turns out that there really was a Richard Whittington, who really was Lord Mayor of London in the reigns of Richard II through Henry V. When later historians dug around and looked through the records, they found out that though he had been an apprentice, he'd never been poor. He was in fact the younger son of a Gloucestershire land-owning family. It could be argued that he rose, but back into the status into which he was born.

I think there's a lot of truth in the reality behind the story as well as perhaps truth in the story. In reality, the urban social hierarchy was almost as stable as the rural one. The families that ran these cities were self-sustaining. They intermarried with each other. They engaged in nepotism. They made sure that they always ran these cities. Still, as so often in this course, perception may have been more important than the reality. The reality may have been that it was very hard to rise in cities too, but the perception was you could do it. Therefore, people hit the roads and turned up in these towns, which explains this growth in population that we're going to see after 1603 and into the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

By the way, Whittington's story has a wonderful ending. He died a very rich man but unmarried and childless, so he left enormous bequests to found the guildhall library, to repair St. Bartholomew's hospital, and to build a whole series of almshouses. In fact, Dick Whittington's money is still working; some of these bequests are still operating to help people in London.

To return to the urban hierarchy, something else that is self-sustaining: money. At the top of any town, would be a group of people known as the "corporation." Their powers were enshrined in the royal charter granted by the king and that establishes the privileges of the town and names them. The corporation consisted of the mayor (in London, a lord mayor) elected annually by the other members of the corporation, the aldermen, or town council.

Together this group of people—there were 26 aldermen in London, so this gives you an idea of how narrow the government is—wielded most of the political power. They administered civic government. They kept the streets lighted. They maintained order. They contained the plague. They distributed

poor relief. Very often, if the borough elected members of Parliament, the charter said that only the corporation had a vote.

These men comprised the oldest and wealthiest mercantile families in town, and their rule was self-perpetuating, as I indicated. What I mean by that is the aldermen chose a new alderman when another alderman died. Well, who are they going to choose? They're going to choose their relatives. They're going to choose their sons-in-law. They're going to intermarry. They were, in fact, not above asking the Crown to regrant their charter so as to narrow the ranks from which the corporation could be drawn—in other words emphasize their monopoly of power.

They sought to maintain good relations with the local aristocrats, but they also sought to remain independent. Remember that during the Middle Ages, these aristocrats had great affinities, so it was often the case that private armies could push a town around. The Duke of Norfolk might dabble in Norwich's politics. As those affinities went away as the Tudors tamed the aristocracy, these cities were able to grow more independent.

Below the corporation came the citizens, or "freemen," of the town. I better explain that just because you live in Bristol doesn't make you a citizen. In the Early-modern period, a citizen was someone who was a member of the guild, or "free of the guild," which means that you'd paid your dues. Guilds had been set up in the Middle Ages with the encouragement of the Church—they all had patron saints, for example—to ease some of the more disturbing aspects of capitalism. The Church was uncomfortable with capitalism.

A big town like London might have a guild for each trade. There were the fishmongers, coopers, and the shoemakers. In most towns, there was one guild. It acted like a sort of better business bureau, trade association for standards and practices, a lobbying association, maybe even a rotary or Kiwanis club, and even a trade union, all wrapped into one. That is, it set prices, wages, and standards of quality for all merchants and tradesmen in the town. Only its members could set up in a trade.

Let's back up and emphasize that. The guild decided how much you could charge for your goods. It decided how much you could pay for your workers,

and it decided exactly what your goods were supposed to look like: how many holes for laces should be in the shoe, how many nails in the heel, and that sort of thing. There is no room for innovation, underselling, or even being generous to your workers.

Only its members could set up in a trade. Given the fact that you can't undersell your competitor, the only way that the guildsmen maintained a profit is by keeping the club small. It's a monopoly.

Guildsmen could vote in municipal elections for local officials and in some boroughs, depending upon what the charter said, they could vote for the MP. The guild also distributed charity to the sick or unemployed members, widows, and orphans. It often endowed schools, hospitals, and almshouses. The classical example is the Merchant Tailors School, which still exists in London. You may remember my mythical visit of Queen Elizabeth to the coopers during her coronation procession and her referring to their school. I didn't mean a school for making barrels; I meant this kind of a school.

New men often complained that the guilds were difficult to break into. They had high entry fines and impossible standards of workmanship: You had to make a masterpiece, which would be approved by the guild. Of course, the standards were high. The guild wanted to keep its membership as small as possible so as to maintain profits.

Like the Church, guilds were experiencing difficulties at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. There was the de-emphasis of religious organizations that we've talked about under Cromwell. There was burgeoning capitalism, which made nonsense of these guild restrictions. Who wanted to charge the same price as the person next door? There were expanding urban populations, which made it harder and harder for the guild to keep an eye on who was selling shoes or who was selling nails. Also, as these populations spill over the walls of the city, it was possible to set up shop just outside the walls. That was a way to avoid being watched by the guild.

Despite all the new blood flooding into towns, the period from 1540–1640 was a difficult one. The dissolution of the monasteries hurt business. The increasing centralization of the wool industry, particularly the shipping

of wool from London, hurt other ports. The stagnation of wool tended to hurt everybody.

English trade at the end of the Tudor period was highly dependent on wool. In fact, I think you could divide it into wool and everything else. Wool had always been England's most lucrative commodity. It consisted of three-quarters of the nation's foreign trade during this period.

Increasingly, English merchants shipped finished wool cloth, not raw wool, to Europe. It worked like this. Shepherds and small farmers kept sheep in the countryside. Their wives sheered the sheep in spring, carted and spun the wool, and wove the cloth for extra money. The wool cloth was then purchased by a "wool factor," who sold it to a great merchant probably based in London. He sold that finished wool cloth abroad, usually through London to Antwerp, which was the great *entrepôt* from which English wool is distributed.

By 1550, the monopoly on the wool trade had been granted to an organization called the Merchant Adventurers. The Merchant Adventurers was not a stock company. They didn't make investments or trading voyages. The Merchant Adventurers was more like a guild. You had to be a member to be allowed to sell wool. This monopoly made the Merchant Adventurers fabulously wealthy. They lived in great multi-story, multi-chimneyed houses. Their rooms were decorated with molded plaster ceilings, rich tapestries, and ornate carved furniture. Their presses brimmed with gold and silver plate, and their closets bulged with expensive gowns of velvet and fur. They were London based. Their monopoly helps to explain why London grows more and more important *vis à vis* the other ports.

In turn, most Elizabethan lords mayor and aldermen were Merchant Adventurers, which makes them very important to the Crown. It would be their loans, ships, and ability to move goods and people that would come in handy during a war.

Yet, almost immediately after having won their monopoly in 1553, their power began to crumble, for the wool trade began to decline. You already know some reasons for this. Remember that in 1568, Philip II closed the

port of Antwerp. Following that, the Wars of Religion and the Dutch revolt helped to make wool a much more precarious proposition.

The second problem with wool was that Europe had enough of it. Quite frankly, there was a limit to the amount of wool that Europe could absorb, and it had been reached by the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century. The result was a series of slumps: 1551–1552, the early 1560s, the early 1570s, the mid-1580s, 1614–1616, 1621–1624, 1641–1642, and the whole of the 1650s. As a result, mercantile profits fell, royal customs yields declined, cloth workers lost their jobs, and farm families lost an important supplementary income.

The Merchant Adventurers reacted in two ways, neither very adventurous. The first was that they saw that the price of wool was falling and they didn't understand modern economic laws, so their immediate reaction was to produce more wool. Their second reaction was better: They did develop new lighter and cheaper fabrics called the "new draperies." These were moderately successful.

Alternatively, there were other industries in the country: tin-mining in Cornwall; lead-mining in Derbyshire and Somerset; coal-mining around Newcastle, Nottinghamshire, and Wales; iron-making in Kent and Sussex; steel-working around Sheffield; pottery in Staffordshire; and shipbuilding all along the coasts and up the Thames. All these undertakings were small scale, however. Two centuries later, they would provide the basis for an industrial revolution, but right now they're not enough to put England back to work.

Could the government do anything? The government's first reaction was to try to find new markets for wool. What they did was chart new, different companies from the Merchant Adventurers to look for these new markets. There was the Muscovy Company, which would sell wool to Russia, founded in 1555; the Spanish Company in 1577; the Eastland Company (for the Baltic) in 1579; the Turkey (later the Levant) Company in 1581; the Senegal Adventurers (later the Royal Africa Company) in 1588; the East India Company in 1600; the Virginia Company in 1606; and the Massachusetts Bay Company in 1629.

If you've been paying attention to that list, you'll know why this didn't work. How many of those places need tons of wool? Are they really clamoring for English wool in Spain, the Levant, or India? They weren't. As a result, these companies actually made their money on imports, importing silks, tea, spices, and medicines from India and the Levant; timber and naval stores from the Baltic; and African human beings, who were shipped to the Americas by the Royal Africa Company. We'll come back to that story later in this course.

Mediterranean traders and Indian nabobs had very little use for English wool, so the English had to ship out tin, fish, and, when all else failed, gold. Later companies, like the Virginia Company and Massachusetts Bay, weren't really founded with wool in mind in any case. The Virginia Company was founded to find gold.

Each of these companies was a royal monopoly. Whatever the pious intentions of their founding—"we're going to put the English people back to work"—in fact, they tended only to benefit the courtiers who greased the wheels and the merchants who were themselves members of the company.

The East India Company was the only one that had the potential to benefit a wider swath of humanity. The East India Company is a new kind of company. It's not a guild. It's actually an investment opportunity. What I mean is that in all the other companies, you joined and all that meant was that you could now raise the money and send out a ship. The profit or loss would be yours.

In the case of the East India Company, you bought stock in the East India Company, and they sent out the ships. They made the voyages. As in all stock companies, profit and loss were shared. Still, because the French and Dutch had already gotten there first, it would be half a century before the East India Company made anybody rich. Not even this venture would make poor people rich; it would only benefit those at the very top.

This explains why the English began to look beyond existing markets and routes to those that could be discovered through exploration and colonization. We will now move away from the town and trade and concentrate on

the English attempts to build markets overseas through exploration and colonization.

I guess the key fact here is the rise of Spain. The rise of Spain, from a poor disunited country before 1492 to being arguably the world's first super power since the Islamic empires of the Middle Ages after 1492, captured the imaginations of other Europeans in a tremendous way. Everybody wanted to be Spain, which means everybody wanted their Columbus. Everybody wanted to break into this lucrative trade from the Americas or the East.

The trouble is that the Spanish/Portuguese Empire had really gotten there first. It was the most lucrative trading system in the world, but as we saw with Drake and Hawkins in 1568, it was a closed system. The English Crown responded by seeking new routes to the East and establishing new colonies of its own, but England started out too poor, too late, and too north to find a new trade route to the East or to establish colonies in Central and South America.

Stop and think about this. You already know that the English Crown is poor. I've been repeating myself about that one for lecture upon lecture, ever since Henry VIII at least. In terms of lateness, it is true that Henry VII sent out exploratory voyages under John Cabot in 1497 and 1498. These were voyages to find the Northwest Passage to the riches of the East. Sebastian Cabot, John Cabot's son, tried again in 1508, but the next serious voyage didn't take place until 1553 and none of these resulted in a route to the fabled East.

One reason for that is geography. As I'm sure you know, if you try to take the shortest route from England to the East, you hit the pack ice of the North. If you sail due west from England, you don't hit the lush islands of the Caribbean or the mineral rich mountains of Mexico, you hit Newfoundland, which has a lot less to offer (at least at first glance) than these other places do.

As we've seen, English attempts to break into the existing Spanish Empire in Central and South America only resulted in war. They were not terribly successful. The same is true of the East India Company at first. I told you that

the French and Dutch had gotten there first. In 1623, the Dutch massacred an English trading colony at Amboina in the Moluccas. From this point on, the Company had to fight literal trade war. By the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, it was arming its ships as “men of war.” It was fielding vast armies against the French and the Dutch. These were also there to intimidate local rulers into trading with the English and not the French or the Dutch.

All of this strong-arming would pay off, but not until after about 1680, or maybe 1700. In the meantime, this left only the bleak eastern coast of North America. The first serious English colonizing ventures into the New World were led by a group of Devonshire gentlemen who were also courtiers: Sir Humphrey Gilbert, Sir Richard Grenville, and Sir Walter Raleigh. In 1578, Gilbert was awarded a patent from the queen to settle North America. Note that the queen didn’t have the money to do it herself, and she couldn’t offer Gilbert much help in the way of money, ships, or men.

As a result, English colonization began in fits and starts. In fact, there never was a successful English colony in America under Elizabeth. As you may know, a number of voyages were sent out in the mid-1580s. One of these did land and claimed a portion of what is now the eastern seaboard of the United States as “Virginia,” after the virgin queen.

The first really serious attempt at settlement didn’t take place until 1587, when Sir Walter Raleigh sent out another fleet of seven ships loaded with 150 colonists who were seriously interested in starting a new life in the New World. They landed at Roanoke and established a permanent colony there, except unfortunately it wasn’t to be all that permanent. Though there were only 17 women, one of these had the distinction of giving birth to the first American of European descent, a little girl named Virginia Dare.

Unfortunately, remember that the colony is founded in 1587. What’s about to happen in England? The year 1588 and the Spanish Armada, so it was impossible to send supply ships until 1590. The crew of that ship found the original campsite cleared and only the word “Croatan” scrawled on a tree to tell what might have happened to the colony. Croatan was a neighboring island, but no trace of the colony was ever found there.



The “Lost Colony of Roanoke” remains, along with the little princes in the Tower, one of the great mysteries of English (or perhaps Anglo-American) history. Were they attacked by native peoples or by the Spanish? Did they starve to death? Were they drowned on the way to Croatan? More intriguingly, were they simply absorbed into the culture of the Native American tribes of the region? We await the archeological evidence that might settle these questions.

In any case, the Lost Colony of Roanoke represents the last attempt of the Elizabethan consortium to colonize the New World.

The first successful English colony in the Americas was founded in 1607 by a consortium led by Sir Thomas Smith of the Virginia Company. It was established at the headwaters of a river that they named the James after England’s new Stuart king. The settlement they named Jamestown.

The purpose of the venture was purely to mine gold. Virginia is not sitting upon mountains of gold, at least to the best of my understanding, so when no gold was found, the earliest colonists proved incapable of growing crops or getting along with the Native American population. The people who made the first voyage to Jamestown were adventurers. They were male. They were going to find gold. They were going to mine. They weren’t farmers and they certainly had no intention of establishing an agricultural paradise.

The colony only began to hit its stride first in the 1610s when it discovered a marketable commodity that would grow in Virginia: tobacco. The smoking of tobacco was just beginning to be popular in England, despite the prescient objections of King James who wrote *A Counterblast to Tobacco* in 1604. James was not above getting his fingers dirty in the contemporary controversies.

In the 1620s, the colonists found a way to make the growing of tobacco even more popular when they discovered a cheap source of labor: African slaves. Within a dozen years of the founding of the first viable English colony in North America, the cruel foundations of the plantation economy had been laid.

By 1635, Jamestown and its environs had a population of about 35,000, but it was bankrupt. This led Charles I to step in and assume control of Virginia as a Crown colony—the first of 13.

The colony of Massachusetts began with the Plymouth settlement on Cape Cod in 1620 on the Virginia Company charter. In 1629, the much larger Massachusetts Bay Company was chartered. These settlements were founded, not so much as a source of easy wealth, but to provide two things: an alternative to the Poor Law for indigent English men and women, and to provide a refuge for Puritans who couldn't conform to the Church of England.

You probably know the story: In 1608, a congregation of Puritan separatists emigrated to Leiden in the Netherlands. In 1620, about 100 from this group returned to England to book passage on the Mayflower departing from Plymouth. The tiny Plymouth colony also had a rough first winter like Jamestown, losing half of its members in the first year. But it survived, and it grew in part because of its emphasis on community and family, rather than individual wealth. It maintained good relations with the native population. A third advantage was that it was under the wise leadership of William Bradford.

The Massachusetts Bay Company was a little different. This was a joint stock company that was chartered in 1629. It established a much larger settlement around Boston, which would eventually absorb Plymouth in 1691. I think people sometimes confuse Massachusetts Bay and Plymouth. They started off as separate foundations, but Plymouth eventually became part of Massachusetts Bay.

The Massachusetts Bay charter allowed for self-government. Its leaders, notably John Winthrop, consciously set about to found a Puritan “New Jerusalem,” a “city on a hill” where all those Puritan ideas could be put into practice. Scriptural liturgy, morality, and social conventions could be enforced free from the persecution of the Church of England and clerics like Whitgift, Bancroft, and later Archbishop Laud. They encouraged whole Puritan congregations to emigrate. They banned other religious groups and

Catholic superstitions, such as traditional Christmas celebrations and other calendar festivals.

A misconception about this colony is that everybody was a Puritan. If you look at the roster of people who went over to Massachusetts, it's a mix between Puritans and people who were coming over for economic reasons. The ones who came over for economic reasons chafed at the strict Puritan morality and enforcement of religious conformity. At this point, I like to remind my students that the Puritans didn't come to America for religious freedom; they came to have religious freedom of their own and to impose their own lifestyle on anyone who lived under their rule.

Puritan intolerance eventually drove a Salem clergyman named Roger Williams to found Rhode Island as a haven for a variety of Protestants as well as Jews. In 1632, George Calvert, Lord Baltimore, a Catholic, founded Maryland. Later in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, it became a haven for Catholics.

In the end, the English colonies of the New World provided limited commercial or military value. Like English cities, they were increasingly important as a safety valve for people who couldn't make it in England otherwise. By 1642, some 60,000 of those people had crossed the Atlantic to found an English society in North America. Unknowingly, they laid the foundation for a new nation, which would be grounded in English custom, language, and law.

In this lecture, we examined a number of alternatives to village life and the rural chain of ranks and duties. People who didn't fit in the countryside could go to town or they could go to America. Most people who needed to escape the village, however, chose a kind of middle ground. There was a middle ground between going to Bristol and going to America, and that was London.

In the next lecture, we will look at Early-modern London, and we will note the opportunities available to people from the countryside there. To quote Samuel Johnson who wrote 100 years later, "Let's to London, for there's variety."

# London

## Lecture 26

**At the beginning of the Tudor period, London was already by far the most important city in the realm. By the end of the Stuarts—that is, the end of our course—it would be 10 times as large, the center of a worldwide empire, and arguably the source of the most vibrant culture in Europe.**

**B**y 1485, London was already England's capital, chief port, and largest and richest city. London's population rose from about 60,000 in 1520 to about 200,000 by 1600 and nearly 500,000 by 1700. This was much faster than the rest of the country and was widely perceived as another sign of breakdown of the Great Chain of Being. London's growth did not occur because it was reproducing itself. As a result of overcrowding, disease, fire, and crime, the death rate exceeded the birthrate. London grew because of migration, some 6,000–8,000 people a year.

According to historian E. A. Wrigley, this expansion had tremendous implications for the English economy and society. London had to be fed, which necessitated more efficient agriculture, more ships and better roads to supply London's food, and better and more flexible credit facilities. The size and economic vitality of London broke down traditional values. Newcomers encountered more people, with differing customs, accents, and beliefs, than in the countryside. They moved about the city, forming and breaking more social relationships more quickly than in their home parishes, forgetting their country customs. Their time and work was measured by clocks and watches, not the seasons and sun. Their work arrangements were rational and casual (that is, based on mutual interest, which could change) rather than lifelong commitments. All these changes might produce loneliness and alienation, but they would be welcomed by those who found village life too dull or constraining. In short, according to this theory, London was a great modernizing influence on English life.

Topographically, London was really two cities joined by the River Thames. The river was the reason for its existence and growth. London was founded

by the Romans circa 60 C.E. Its location on the Thames was crucial. The Romans picked this spot because it was the last point (most western) in the river still wide enough to harbor big ships and the first point (most eastern) in the river that was bridgeable. They built the first London bridge to connect the north and south. As a result, London became a vital crossroads for trade, a crucial military choke point (a wall was also built around the city), and the capital of Roman Britain.

In 1603, there were still only two ways to get across the river: by barge or by London Bridge. London Bridge was built in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Because land in London was at such a premium, the bridge itself was covered with houses and shops. In fact, London mostly developed along the northern bank of the Thames. The southern bank, comprising the borough of Southwark, was outside the jurisdiction of the city government. This fact explains why the theaters (the Rose, the Globe), the bull and bear rings, and the taverns (the Tabard) were found here during our period. The north bank may be divided into London proper (within the old Roman wall) to the east and the royal borough of Westminster to the west. The only land route between them, Fleet Street-Strand-King Street, was not fully paved in 1603. Most people went by water-taxi, that is, the London oarsmen and their barges.

The City and East End were the economic heart of London. Just east of London Bridge, on the north bank, lay the chief source of the city's wealth, the docks. Here the river was filled with ships, lorries, and other means of transportation. Goods had to pass through the royal Customs House, which provided the largest segment of government income. Spreading eastward was a complex of wharfs, shipwrights, sailors' houses, taverns, brothels, and so on that became known as the East End. This area was a "first stop" for immigrants and a "last stop" for the very poor. Still, this area had not yet earned the unsavory reputation it would have in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The wealth from trade flowed into a financial district within the old Roman wall known later as the City. Also within the wall might be found the Guildhall, where the Lord Mayor and 26 aldermen governed London; numerous smaller halls, one for each guild or livery company in London; the Royal Exchange, where merchants met to strike deals; Old St. Paul's Cathedral, one of the largest churches in Europe, but only the most notable



**The monarchy and nobility enjoyed the complex of palaces upwind and upriver at Westminster.**

of 96 parish churches in the walled city; and the Tower of London, built by William the Conqueror to safeguard his kingdom's most precious jewel. By 1603, it was less a royal palace than a royal prison.

London within the walls in 1603 was a maze of narrow, winding lanes and hastily thrown up, rickety houses made of wood and plaster all crowded together. No wonder early-modern London was subject to fires, disease, building collapses, and a consequent high death rate. It is not surprising that the monarchy and nobility abandoned the City for the complex of palaces upwind and upriver at Westminster. Before the Norman Conquest, Edward the Confessor established what would eventually be the nation's administrative and legislative heart. Westminster Abbey, built by Edward the Confessor and rebuilt by Henry III, was where the monarch was crowned and, before 1820, buried, along with other heroes of English politics, war, and culture. Westminster Hall, built by William II, housed the courts of King's Bench, Common Pleas, and Chancery. This was also where great state trials took place. Westminster Palace had been a royal palace until

partially destroyed by fire in 1514. In 1529, Henry VIII gave it for the use of Parliament, which met there until it burned down in 1834. It was then replaced by the far more magnificent palace of Westminster, designed by Augustus Pugin to look more Gothic than the original structure.

Whitehall Palace, a vast, disorganized collection of buildings on the river, was confiscated from Cardinal Wolsey by Henry VIII in 1529. Here, in 1603, the monarch and the court lived, worked, and played. More specifically, here the monarch convened the Privy Council and decided on policy. Most divisions of the central government had their offices here as well. (The term “Whitehall” is still synonymous with government in England.) The court produced elaborate pageants, plays, and ceremonies here, and courtiers vied for royal favor, office, titles, pensions, and lands. (Most failed.)

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**Most divisions of the central government had their offices [at Whitehall] as well. (The term “Whitehall” is still synonymous with government in England.)**

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Many nobles built or rented great houses along the Strand or even further west in the West End. This area was convenient because it was near the court, and both the prevailing winds and the current of the river sent smoke and waste east. Many of the great bishops’ palaces along the Strand had been confiscated at the Reformation. These were bought or awarded to nobles, who often rebuilt them to suit 17<sup>th</sup>-century tastes. In the 1630s, the Russells, Earls of Bedford, commissioned Inigo Jones to design the first London square, Covent Garden, to attract members of the gentry.

Londoners faced two massive disasters at mid-century. Plague had attacked London many times since 1348. The last and greatest outbreak took place in 1665 and killed perhaps 70,000 people. Just as London was recovering from the plague in the summer of 1666, the Great Fire began in the City near London Bridge and raged for nearly a week. It killed few but destroyed nearly the whole of the old walled city, including old St. Paul’s.

London was rebuilt within a few years. Sir Christopher Wren designed many of the new churches, as well as new St. Paul’s Cathedral, which remains a

symbol of London's indomitability. In fact, despite these short-term setbacks, as well as those of the Dutch Wars, London continued to grow, becoming the largest and wealthiest city in Europe by 1700. ■

### Suggested Reading

Bucholz and Key, *Early Modern England*, chap. 6, sec. 10.

Inwood, *History of London*, chaps. 5–14.

### Questions to Consider

1. Why did defenders of the Great Chain of Being hate London? In what ways was it corrosive of the Chain?
2. Many preachers argued that the Great Plague and Great Fire were divine punishments for London's materialism and sinfulness. Why did Londoners reject this judgment and rebuild so quickly?



# London

## Lecture 26—Transcript

In the last lecture, we examined a variety of alternatives to life in the English village. Each of these became more important as the population rose and threw more and more people out of work and off the land. The most popular alternative of all lay much closer than Virginia or Massachusetts Bay. It was London.

At the beginning of the Tudor period, London was already by far the most important city in the realm. By the end of the Stuarts—that is, the end of our course—it would be 10 times as large, the center of a worldwide empire, and arguably the source of the most vibrant culture in Europe.

Today, we will pay a visit to London around 1603—that is, about the middle of this process. This lecture centers on a topographical tour of London, which I hope will convey much of the city's history. We'll follow the Thames from the damp and sooty alleyways of the city within the walls to the east to the splendid galleries of Whitehall and St. James to the west. More specifically, we'll visit the docks in the East End; the financial district, later known as the City; St. Paul's Cathedral; the Strand; Westminster; Whitehall Palace; and the West End.

Along the way, we'll shoot the rapids near London Bridge. We'll join the groundlings at the Rose or the Globe. We'll then jump ahead chronologically to brave the dangers of plague and fire. Let's to London.

By 1485, London was already England's capital, court city, legal center, chief port, entertainment center, and its largest and richest city. It was about to become more of all those things. London's population rose much faster than the rest of the country. You'll remember that population was growing, but London grew from about 60,000 people in 1520 to about 200,000 by 1600 and then nearly half a million by 1700. This was twice the rate of growth of England's population.

This growth was widely perceived as a bad thing and another sign that the Great Chain of Being was breaking down. King James I complained

of his new capital city that, “With time, England will be only London and the whole country will be left waste.” He and other conservatives worried that London’s sheer size, the anonymity it provided to individuals, and the changes in wealth and status it brought to their lives would wreck the Great Chain of Being.

In many ways, they were right. What they didn’t understand was that London’s growth was necessary. It was a necessary safety valve siphoning off all that excess population in the countryside, who would otherwise have had no place to go. Put another way, London didn’t grow because it was reproducing itself. The death rate exceeded the birth rate in Early-modern London. For every 35 born in Early-modern London, 40 died. This was because male immigrants outnumbered female immigrants, so fewer marriages and less reproduction was taking place than would normally be the case. Apprentices, one of the largest cohorts of migrants, were not allowed to marry.

Above all, it was because London was a terribly unhealthy place. It was prone to overcrowding, disease, fire, and crime. As a result, the average life expectancy of a Londoner circa 1603 is 25–30 years—at least five years less than the general population.

London grew therefore because of in-migration, which was massive, about 6,000–8,000 people a year to sustain the growth that we’ve described. Put another way, it’s been estimated that something like one-sixth of all English people lived in London at some point in their lives during this period.

The great historian of London’s demography is a man named E.A. Wrigley. He has argued that this expansion had tremendous implications for the economy and the society of England. Indeed, he would argue that London is the great modernizing force in English society.

Take just the basic business of feeding these people; London had to be fed. That required more efficient agriculture in the countryside. This would lead to experiments with better fertilizers and more efficient crop rotation, more fen draining and the clearing of forests. In order to get this food to London, there was going to have to be more ships for the coastal trade in fish and

in coal from Newcastle. More robust wagons, better roads, the dredging of rivers, and a better infrastructure for trade and travel all were needed. In order to keep London fed, there was going to have to be better and more flexible credit facilities and communications, so that participants along this distribution system could ship and purchase goods more easily and reliably.

Even more important, the size and vitality of London must have had a profound social, cultural, and psychological effect on all those immigrants—all those people who were coming in. I'd like you to imagine a young man or woman (perhaps the grandchild of our woman from Lecture Twenty), who grew up in a tightly knit village of 300, coming to London for the first time. In that village, life was quiet. It was lived on a human scale. Everyone knew everyone else. Everyone shared the same calendar and traditions. Everyone did pretty much what their parents had done, their lives fully mapped out from cradle to grave.

Now imagine arriving in London for the first time. Imagine that you are accosted by more unfamiliar people, sights, sounds, and smells than you could experience in a lifetime back home. According to Thomas Dekker writing in 1606, "In every street, carts and coaches make such a thundering as if the world ran upon wheels. At every corner, men, women, and children meet in such shoals that posts are set up of purpose to strengthen the houses lest with jostling one another, they should shoulder them down. Besides, hammers are beating in one places, tubs ooping in another, pots clinking in a third, water tankards running at tilt in a fourth."

Your own values and traditions would be under assault, as would be your senses, for in this town, there is in a sense no such thing as "everyone." Everyone doesn't do the same thing. These people, remember, came like yourself from every part of England—maybe even from Europe and the Americas. They bring different customs, accents, and even different religious beliefs from yours. Your religious beliefs will soon perhaps begin to seem irrelevant.

Your life would become more rational and practical and less natural or traditional. Remember that in the village, your time is measured by the sun and the seasons—spring for planting, autumn for harvesting. Now, it's

parsed out by your master's watch. You move about the city forming and breaking more social relationships more quickly than in your home parish. You forget your old country customs in the process.

In part, you're forming and breaking these relationships more frequently because people are dying more frequently than they are at home. Your personal cast of characters is changing constantly. Another reason for this constant change is that you're probably forming and breaking economic relationships more quickly and more rationally. Remember, that in the village, you probably worked for a landlord that your grandfather worked for (at least that landlord's family). These relationships aren't just based on money—they're based on tradition and personal connection.

Here in the city, if another master offers you a better wage, what are you going to do? You're going to take it and you're going to break the previous relationship. London was growing too fast for the parish structure to keep up. There's no Church warden or parish priest looking out after you or watching your behavior. All this might lead you to feel lonely—an absence of neighborliness, a sense of not belonging or not mattering.

If you found village life too dull or too constraining, however; if you resented the lack of privacy and the constant prying of your neighbors into your business; or the threat of a skimmington, then this newfound freedom must have been exhilarating. In short, according to Wrigley's theory, London is the great modern influence on English life.

Let's get a bit closer. Let's join our villager in the streets of London. Let us walk these streets and see if we can get a sense of that modernizing influence. London was really two cities: London within the walls to the east and Westminster to the west, joined by the River Thames. The river was the reason for London's existence in the first place and for its growth and prosperity.

London was founded by the Romans as Londinium around 60 of the Common Era—that's within about 20 years of the first serious Roman establishment in England. Its location is crucial. First, the River Thames is a highway, which allows access to both Europe and the empire on one hand, but also to the

interior on the other. It's very convenient for the Romans that this river is here. They picked this spot because this is the last point—that is, the most western point—in the river that's still wide enough and deep enough for big ships at high tide. That means it's also the first spot that's narrow enough to be bridgeable. This means it will be a crossroads: north-south, east-west.

By the way, Rome itself is founded on just about the same point of the Tiber. In many respects, the Romans were looking for another Rome.

As a result, London becomes a crucial crossroads for trade, a thriving city of perhaps 100,000 even then within 40–50 years of founding. It is also a vital military chokepoint. To protect London's one square mile, the Romans build a wall around it. That wall would stand intact into the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century. On the day of our visit in 1603, the wall is still there, and it has some significance in keeping out invaders or teams from the Wars of the Roses that you don't agree with.

Finally, London was, of course, the capital of Roman Britain.

The north-south connection is in many respects not the most important one. It's not as important as east-west. In 1603, there were still only two ways to get across the river: by barge or by London Bridge. The current version of London Bridge—I mean the version current in 1603—had been built in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Because land in London is at a premium, the bridge itself was covered with houses and shops.

Because it forms the southern entrance to the city (the bridge goes north to south), its south gate is famous for the grisly sight of the heads of traitors mounted on pikes. Here you might take your final leave of William Wallace, Thomas More, Bishop Fisher, and Thomas Cromwell—some of the most eminent people in English history looking down upon those who are entering London at this point.

This London Bridge would be torn down at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It would be succeeded by another, which would itself be moved to Lake Havasu City, Arizona, at the end of the 1960s. The current London Bridge (that is, current in the 21<sup>st</sup> century) was built between 1967 and 1972.

In fact, London mostly developed along the Thames's northern bank, which is why I say that the north-south connection is not that important. The southern bank comprised the borough of Southwark, which was just outside the jurisdiction of the city fathers. That's important because it means that Southwark was a place of relative freedom. In fact, Southwark is a combat zone. It's a place where you go if you want to see bear-baiting or bull-baiting. It's where you go to the theater. It's no accident that the Rose and the Globe are built in Southwark so that they won't be shut down by the city authorities. There are a lot of taverns here. If we want an exciting, slightly dangerous time, we're heading across the river to Southwark.

For most Londoners, the heart of London is on the north bank. Their perambulations move on an east-west track along the river. The north bank may be divided into London proper within the old Roman wall to the east, and the royal borough of Westminster to the west. The only land route between them is the system of streets that goes Cheapside, Fleet Street, the Strand, and King Street (King Street will later be Whitehall). This network of streets wasn't fully paved yet in 1603 and you know what that means: clouds of dust in summer and seas of mud into which carriage wheels and small animals would be swallowed up in winter.

Nevertheless, along the Strand stood some magnificent bishops' palaces, which would be confiscated at the Reformation. Most people travel east to west via water-taxi, that is, the London oarsmen and their barges. If we walk down to the river, we hear their cries of, "Oars! Oars!" If we're young ladies up from the country, we may think that we've just been insulted.

Even this route is not without danger as London Bridge forms rapids. These were impossible to shoot at full tide and difficult at ebb. What this means is that one of the more popular aristocratic forms of suicide in London is to try to shoot the rapids at high tide.

Just east of London Bridge on the north bank lay the chief source of the city's wealth, the docks. Here the river is filled with big ships, lorries, etc. Goods had to pass through the royal Customs House, which makes it the most important source of the government's revenue. Spreading eastward is a complex of wharfs, shipwrights, sailors' houses, taverns, and brothels.

Eastward from the docks would form that district to be known as the East End. This is a first point of entry for many immigrants to London. It does not yet have the unsavory reputation that it would in Victorian England, but it's not by any means the wealthiest part of London.

The wealth from trade flowed into a financial district within the old Roman wall, which would soon come to be known, and is known today, as the City. The City is London's Wall Street. Here we find the Guildhall, where the Lord Mayor and 26 aldermen govern London; numerous smaller halls, one for each guild or livery company (the shoemakers' hall, the fishmongers' hall, etc.); and the Royal Exchange, which was built by Sir Thomas Gresham in the heart of the City in 1566–1567. The Royal Exchange is just a place where businessmen go to strike deals. If you have read *A Christmas Carol*, you may remember Scrooge many centuries later going to the Royal Exchange. This is actually where he hears of his own funeral later on in the novel.

Towering over the City was old St. Paul's Cathedral, the religious heart of the City and one of the largest churches in Europe. It's 585 feet long. That makes it the biggest building in London and the second longest church in Christendom. Its steeple is almost 500 feet high. Compare that with Salisbury Cathedral at about 220 feet high. That steeple, however, had burnt down in 1561, so in 1603, we just see a sort of flat-top. In fact, by 1603, old St. Paul's Cathedral is falling apart. It's in desperate need of renovation, so I suppose it's a mixed blessing that it will burn down in the Great Fire of London of 1666 and be rebuilt in its present magnificent baroque form by Sir Christopher Wren.

This is only the most notable of 96 parish churches within the one square mile of the walled city—it's a very religious city.

Finally, the Tower of London stands on the Thames on the southeast corner of the old city. It was built by William the Conqueror as a fortress to protect the jewel of his kingdom. By 1603, it's used much more often as a prison and very rarely as a royal palace—usually only the night before the king's coronation procession through the streets of London.

Apart from these great buildings, London within the walls in 1603 is a ramshackle maze of narrow, winding lanes and hastily thrown up, rickety, tumbledown houses made of wood and plaster, all crowded together because of the premium on space. No wonder that Early-modern London is subject to fires, disease, building collapses, and crime. This in turn helps to explain its high death rate and also why the monarchy and the aristocracy moved west. In fact, there's a very good natural reason for the monarchy and aristocracy to move west. The Thames flows west to east and the prevailing winds move in the same direction. That means that all of your soot and human waste go east, so you want to go west.

At the heart of Westminster is a complex of buildings that form the nerve center of the English administration. I suppose pride of place belongs to Westminster Abbey, built by Edward the Confessor and rebuilt by Henry III. This is where every monarch is crowned and then buried at the end of their reign until about 1820. Coronations still take place there today, as far as we know, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

This is where you might find in 1603 a few poets: Chaucer, Spenser, and later Ben Jonson. But by and large, the age when great English men—great English citizens—are buried in Westminster Abbey doesn't really take place until after our period. At the moment, it's a final resting place only for kings and queens of England.

By the way, I should note that the two tall Gothic towers that exist today in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are fakes. They won't be built until the 18<sup>th</sup> century, erected on designs by Sir Nicholas Hawksmoor. As you'll see, an awful lot of Gothic London turns out to be fake.

Near Westminster Abbey is Westminster Hall. It was built by William II in 1097 as part of Westminster Palace. It's 240 feet long and 40 feet high, making it the biggest hall in England, though William Rufus referred to it as a "mere bedchamber." This is where the law courts meet in 1603: King's Bench, Common Pleas, Chancery, and Exchequer. It's also where the great trials took place: Thomas More and Bishop Fisher in 1535, Anne Boleyn in 1536, the Duke of Somerset in 1552, Guy Fawkes in 1606, the Earl of Strafford in 1641, and King Charles I in 1649. You can actually go and stand



on little brass markers that purport to stand for where these defendants would have stood in their trial.

Yet, from the 1650s, Westminster Hall is also filled with shops and arcades, so it's sort of a great shopping mall with a bit of *Court TV* added in. This is a popular rendezvous point. This is where Samuel Pepys goes when he wants to meet a lady other than his wife.

This is also where the king held his coronation banquets. These were distinguished by two ceremonies, one planned and one unplanned. The planned ceremony is that a member of the Dymock family will ride in on a horse, throw down a gauntlet, and challenge anyone in the hall to challenge the king's title to the throne. There never were any takers. The unplanned ceremony is that traditionally at coronation banquets, the guests stole everything that moved: spoons, forks, serving dishes, tureens—you name it. I found this in my own research on the royal household. Immediately after a coronation banquet, there's always a lot of business for the London silversmiths because they've got to replace all this stuff.

When we think of the Palace of Westminster, the mother of all Parliaments, we think of the magnificent Gothic structure on the banks of the Thames. Most people don't realize that that building too is a 19<sup>th</sup> century fake. The original Westminster Palace was far less impressive. Westminster Palace had been a royal residence since the Middle Ages. It was partially destroyed by fire in 1514. When Henry VIII acquired Whitehall in 1529, he thought it would be a good idea to give the rundown old palace to Parliament. The House of Lords met in the painted chamber; the House of Commons in St. Stephen's chapel.

The building was never adequate to the task—it couldn't hold all the members of Commons. That's why to this day, the members of the House of Commons sit on benches close packed together instead of at desks. By the way, they also sit across from each other the distance of two sword lengths, the idea being that during a heated debate, no one is able to pull out their sword and attack a member on the opposite bench.

Both parts of the Palace were always falling down and subject to damp. In 1834, long after the end of our course, the old Westminster Palace burnt down to be replaced by the far more magnificent and Gothic-looking Palace of Westminster designed by Augustus Pugin.

In any case, the heart of Westminster in 1603 is not the Parliament House, as it was also called, but the king's Court at Whitehall. Whitehall Palace is a vast disorganized collection of buildings on the river comprising well over 1,000 rooms. You'll recall that it had been confiscated by Henry VIII from Cardinal Wolsey, who'd made the mistake of inviting the king over for dinner. Never do that if your house is better than the king's.

Here in 1603, the monarch and the court lived, worked, and played. Here the king convened the Privy Council and decided on policy. Most offices of the central government had their offices here. That's why the term "Whitehall" is still synonymous with government in England today, long after the palace itself burnt down in 1698. The court produced and enjoyed elaborate pageants, masques, plays, banquets, and ceremonies here. This is where "God's lieutenant on earth," his ministers, and foreign ambassadors could be seen, accosted, and perhaps influenced.

Courtiers lined the galleries hoping to be noticed for their beauty, their bravery, or their wit. They vied for royal favor, office, titles, pensions, and lands. Most vie in vain. The annals of the court are full of rueful tales of ambitious young men and rapacious young women who squandered their fortunes, reputations, self-respect, and youth on the pursuit of honors, lands, and fame that never came.

Still, even if you didn't want honors, lands, and fame, this is still the place to see all the latest fashions, hear the latest gossip, pick up an art commission if you're an artist, or meet a spouse. In other words, what I'm arguing and have argued in my own published work is that the Court of England was at once Whitehall and Capital Hill, but also Parnassus and Hollywood, Bloomsbury and the round table of the Algonquin Hotel. It was a consummate meeting of minds and a sublime meat market. We have nothing like it in our society today, so they came and they came and they came.

Obviously, everyone wanted to be close to the fun, so many nobles began to build or rent great houses along the Strand or even further west in the West End. This area was convenient because it was near the court, and we all remember which way the wind blows and the water flows. Many of the great bishops' palaces along the Strand, confiscated at the Reformation, were sold or even given to great nobles: Exeter House, named after the diocese, became Southampton House, named after the peer; Carlyle House became Bedford House; Durham House became Sir Walter Raleigh's. Somerset House, built by the Duke of Somerset, sits on the site of several bishops' palaces. He was quite a rapacious taker of Church lands.

In the 1630s, the Russells, Earls of Bedford, commissioned Inigo Jones to design something rather different: the first London housing development to attract members of the gentry, Covent Garden. In fact, what Covent Garden is is the first London square. The idea behind the square is a relatively airy dwelling place that is also private and therefore secure. Streets don't run through the square, so there's a sense of living almost within a college cloister in a compact space.

More than half a century after our visit to London, the city will be laid low by a series of disasters. Plague had attacked London many times since 1348. In fact, what is supposedly the Great Plague of 1665—the one immortalized in Defoe's *Journal of the Plague Year*—may not have been the most terrible.

The figures for plague are astounding. Listen to these statistics: In 1563, 17,400 Londoners died. That's 24 percent of London's estimated population at the time. In 1593, the plague came back, killing 14 percent. In 1603, it came back again, killing 23 percent. In 1625, it killed 20 percent of London's population. In 1665, it killed 55,800 people. That's only 18 percent, so that really wasn't as rough an outing with the plague as the previous ones had been. I should tell you that the 55,000 number may be low. I've seen estimates as high as 100,000, which would make the Great Plague of 1665 the "great" plague.

When the plague hit, the court and aristocracy got out of town. In 1665, they went to Oxford. The Lord Mayor and aldermen, however, usually stayed on the job, issuing well-meaning orders that often did more harm than good. For

example, they quarantined victims with their families in houses marked with a red cross. Being locked up with plague victims was almost certainly a death sentence. They opened pest houses. These were intended to be hospitals, but of course they were centers of breeding for plague.

They ordered the killing of all dogs and cats, thinking that dogs and cats spread the disease, when in fact, of course, the cats killed the rats that helped spread the disease. Bad move.

Finally, they ordered mass burials of the dead with no attendees. That is to say, you weren't allowed to attend your friend's or your family member's funeral. People flouted this one. They went to the funerals anyway, taking great risk to do so—perhaps a comment on the religious feeling of English men and women. It's also a comment on that issue of whether they loved each other or not. It was a great risk to do this.

No one knew that the 1665 outbreak would be the last. Londoners continued to fear plague well into the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Fire was also a frequent hazard, given London's close-packed wooden buildings. Just as London was recovering from the 1665 plague, the Great Fire began. In the early hours of 2 September 1666 in Pudding Lane near London Bridge, in the house of Thomas Farrinor, the king's baker, he or someone had probably not damped the fire to the royal ovens as effectively as he or they could have done. At first, the fire was well contained. It didn't spread much. Sam Pepys got up, looked at it, and went to bed. So, rather less defensibly, did the Lord Mayor of London. His famous quote upon seeing the fire was, "Pish! Why a woman could piss it out."

In part because of high winds and in part because London had experienced a dry summer, the Fire raged for nearly a week. Few were killed, but it destroyed nearly the whole of the old walled city, including old St. Paul's. Many Londoners had stored their goods in the crypt, thinking that surely God would spare St. Paul's. The Guildhall burned down. The Royal Exchange burned down. Eighty-seven parish churches burned down, as did 52 company halls and 13,200 houses at a total cost of perhaps £10 million.

Popular opinion, and later cynically the government, blamed Roman Catholics: “They set the fire!” Puritan preachers saw it as a punishment for the nation’s sinfulness. I think it’s characteristic of London that it can’t be stopped. No one paid attention to those Puritan preachers. Instead, they rebuilt London and rebuilt it more magnificently than before. The city was in fact rebuilt within only a few years.

Sir Christopher Wren designed many of the new churches, as well as the new St. Paul’s Cathedral, which ever since has remained a symbol of London’s indomitability. There’s a famous story I can’t resist telling. As he was laying out his plans to rebuild St. Paul’s Cathedral on the rubble, he sends a boy to find a stone just to use as a paperweight. The boy comes back with a stone upon which is written the word “*resurgam*”: “I will rise.” St. Paul’s would return.

In fact, despite these obvious short-term devastations, London continued to grow, becoming the largest and wealthiest city in Europe by 1700. It also became the cultural capital of England as never before or since.

In the next lecture, we will examine English high culture for this period: For the Elizabethan, Jacobean, and Caroline ages saw the arts in England flourish as never before. In Lecture Twenty-Eight [sic Twenty-Seven], “The Age of Shakespeare and His Friends.”

# The Elizabethan and Jacobean Age

## Lecture 27

**That is, never before had so many English men and women excelled at so many art forms. Why should this be so? ... The “Zeitgeist Fallacy,” doesn’t really hold water when examined in the light of real human beings. ... Economic and intellectual conditions can create an environment in which art may, but will not necessarily, flourish. ... Still, we cannot explain why these opportunities were taken.**

**T**he achievement of English arts circa 1603 was far beyond anything yet seen. Never before had so many Englishmen and women excelled at so many art forms. Church, Crown, and court patronage were the three great sources of commissions and subjects before the 17th century. Church patronage declined after the Reformation: Many abbey churches were converted to lay uses, and much Church art was destroyed. Crucifixes, stained glass, and other religious images were banned. Church finances declined. The Crown took up some of the slack under Henry VIII and his successors, who commissioned new prayer books and other religious literature. But Elizabeth I was too poor and too frugal to foster much art directly. She promoted tournaments, pageants, and processions, especially on the anniversary of her accession. She also encouraged or inspired writers to praise her as part of the Gloriana myth.

James I (1603–1625) was no more wealthy but far less frugal. He commissioned new palace architecture from Inigo Jones, especially the Banqueting House, Whitehall, and the Queen’s House, Greenwich, and elaborate theatrical productions called masques. These involved such writers as Ben Jonson, musicians, dancers, magnificent sets designed by Jones, and sumptuous costumes. Charles I (1625–1649) was a great connoisseur. He continued the production of masques. He patronized great artists and encouraged the musicians of the royal band and Chapel Royal.

Court and aristocratic patronage was always important, sometimes supplementing, sometimes surpassing that of the monarch. Such writers as Edmund Spenser, William Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, and later, the Cavalier

poets might not receive direct commissions from the Crown, but they made important contacts and received inspiration by hanging around the court. The court was full of aristocrats who commissioned art. The Earl of Leicester under Elizabeth and the Duke of Buckingham and Earl of Arundel under Charles I were great collectors. They encouraged diplomats and friends to go on “the Grand Tour” and bring back European paintings, sculpture, furniture, gold, silver and metalwork, and tapestry hangings.

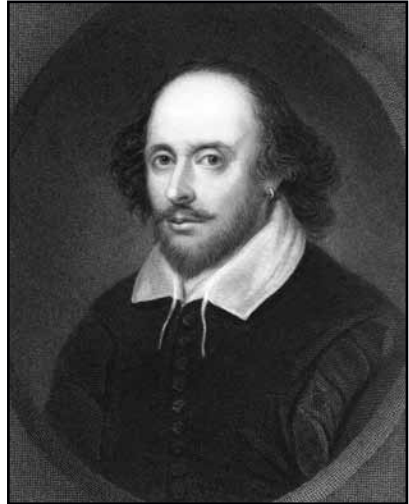
English men and women excelled at many forms of art, but not evenly. English architecture emerged from the High Gothic into a more classical, or Palladian, style. By 1485, most of the great churches in England had been built. Henry VIII built numerous palaces and houses, but his successors, we have noted, were less ambitious. Great aristocrats built magnificent houses, such as Hatfield and Theobalds. Some also speculated and built in London, including the Earl of Bedford at Covent Garden.

After Holbein, the Tudor era was not a great one for painting. Elizabeth may have set English painting back by strictly regulating her image, demanding that she always be portrayed as youthful. Nicholas Hilliard produced exquisite miniatures of her court. Later, Charles I and his court spurred a renaissance in English art by patronizing Rubens, especially his *Apotheosis of James I* at the Banqueting House, and Van Dyck, especially his series of paintings of the royal family. These paintings, along with court masques, conveyed a propaganda image of the king as godlike, serene, and commanding. Unfortunately, that message was rarely seen by any but his most aristocratic visitors to Whitehall.

In music, the court remained a prime center of artistic production. In the Chapel Royal, talented musicians, such as William Byrd and Orlando Gibbons, wrote magnificent choral anthems. The king’s Band of Violins, the only real orchestra in the country, and other court musical groups, produced sophisticated secular music for performance at masques and in the theater. Individual musicians, including Byrd, Gibbons, and John Dowland, produced songs and keyboard works for quiet hours. Much of this music was printed and played beyond the court, in parish churches and private houses. Below the level of the elite, towns maintained minstrels and waits to perform

at ceremonial occasions. Ordinary people sang and played folksongs and ballads in taverns and carols and hymns in church.

Drama is the art form most associated with Elizabethan and Jacobean England. The first plays in English were religious mystery plays and mummers' plays, associated with Church festivals. During the 16th century, strolling bands of players put on short interludes in private houses. By the beginning of Elizabeth's reign, full five-act plays were being put on at the universities and the inns of court, especially during Christmas revels. Elizabeth enjoyed these occasions and began to patronize similar productions at court. She established the office of Master of the Revels in 1579. She began to sponsor a group of players (the Queen's Men), as did other court nobles, such as Leicester. This sponsorship was important, because the Poor Law of 1572 outlawed "common players in interludes and minstrels" lacking such protection.



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**Shakespeare was at court with an abundance of artists and writers like William Byrd, Nicholas Hilliard, Edmund Spenser, and Ben Jonson.**

The earliest public theaters were established outside the jurisdiction of the London authorities: the Red Lion, north of the city, in 1567; the Theatre in Shoreditch in 1577; the Rose in Southwark in 1577; and the Globe in Southwark in 1598. Unlike the court productions, these theaters attracted a wide audience, from aristocrats who sat in upper boxes to the "groundlings" at stage level. Under the management of opportunistic impresarios, such as Richard Burbage, Christopher Marlowe wrote *Dr. Faustus*, *Tamburlaine*, and *Edward II*; Ben Jonson wrote *Sejanus*, *Volpone*, *The Alchemist*, and *Bartholemew Fair*; and William Shakespeare wrote history plays, including *Richard II*, *Richard III*, and the *Henriads*; comedies, including *Much Ado*



about *Nothing* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*; and tragedies, including *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *King Lear*, and *Romeo and Juliet*.

The most powerful and lasting cultural achievement of Elizabethan, Jacobean, and Caroline England was the perfection of the English language. English became eloquent, expressive, and comprehensible in a wide variety of genres. This was demonstrated in philosophical, theological, and historical works by Francis Bacon (*Essays*, *The New Atlantis*), John Foxe (*Book of Martyrs*), Raphael Holinshed (*Chronicles*), Richard Hooker (*Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*), and Sir Walter Raleigh (*History of the World*); travel literature by Richard Hakluyt (*Principal Navigations of the English Nation*) and William Camden (*Britannia*); and poetry by Shakespeare (sonnets), Sir Philip Sidney (*Arcadia*, *Astrophel and Stella*), and Edmund Spenser (*The Faerie Queen*), as well as that of the metaphysical poets (John Donne and George Herbert) and Cavalier poets (Abraham Cowley and Sir John Suckling).

**The most powerful and lasting cultural achievement of Elizabethan, Jacobean, and Caroline England was the perfection of the English language.**

The achievement is perhaps best summed up in the authorized (King James) version of the Bible of 1611. Though translated by a committee of bishops, it presented Scripture in prose that still resonates through our language.

Even in the areas of language, art, and culture, English men and women in 1603 worried about disorder. Such an eloquent and powerful language could inspire—or inflame. Thus, the Crown and ruling elite tried to manipulate it for their own ends. All the monarchs of this period knew the importance of propaganda and encouraged artists, writers, builders, and others to portray them in the best possible light. Elizabeth I, in particular, carefully regulated her image to create the myth of Gloriana. James I and Charles I emphasized their divine right to rule in masques and portraits. But this propaganda tended to be seen only by courtiers. The early Stuarts neglected the wider audience of the English people—much to their eventual cost.

After flirting with a relatively free press under Edward VI, the government enacted strict censorship. Statutes of 1549 and 1554 forbade the publishing of heretical or seditious books. In the 1580s, with fears of Catholic plots, this became a capital offense. In 1586, the Star Chamber decreed that all non-university printing presses had to be based in London and licensed by the Stationer's Company, and all books had to be licensed by a bishop. Nevertheless, if the language of the King James Bible could be used by the king to justify his divine right to rule, it might just as easily be used to challenge that rule, in Parliament and without. ■

### Suggested Reading

Bucholz and Key, *Early Modern England*, chap. 6, sec. 12.

Palliser, *Age of Elizabeth*, chap. 12.

Smuts, *Culture and Power*.

### Questions to Consider

1. Why did English culture produce so much great and lasting art during this period? Can this explosion of activity be related to political, social, religious, or economic events?
2. Why did the authorities seek to restrict and censor writing, speech, even the royal image? Of what were they fearful?

# The Elizabethan and Jacobean Age

## Lecture 27—Transcript

In the last lecture, we hinted at the vibrant cultural mix of Elizabethan and Jacobean London. In this lecture, we will address in greater detail the tremendous cultural flowering that took place in England in the last years of the 16<sup>th</sup> and the first years of the 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. We will look at how the Church and the court patronized artists, and at the arts themselves of English painting and portraiture, music both sacred and secular, and literature in its many forms: history, philosophy, travel writing, poetry, and drama.

The lecture concludes with possibly the greatest achievement of the age: the development of the English language itself in all of its richness of expression. The years between 1558 and 1642 saw an efflorescence of English culture that went beyond anything yet seen in size, scope, and quality. That is, never before had so many English men and women excelled at so many art forms.

Why should this be so? Unfortunately, historians have never really come up with much of an explanation for shifts in artistic quantity, quality, or taste. In the past, cultural historians might have argued that the art of an age simply reflected its material conditions and its spirit. That is, great ages of economic expansion or military endeavor inevitably produced great art, in part to glorify such endeavor. This theory, called the “Zeitgeist Fallacy,” doesn’t really hold water when examined in the light of real human beings.

For example, take the great age of Portuguese expansion in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. I think we can agree that it produced relatively little art that is recognized and appreciated beyond the borders of Portugal today. Spain’s golden age, or “*Siglo de Oro*,” occurred in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, after its military hegemony began to crumble.

While the Elizabethan age was undoubtedly one of maritime adventure and some martial success, it was also, as we’ve seen, a time of religious and economic dislocation. It might be better to say that economic and intellectual conditions can create an environment in which art may, but will not necessarily, flourish. In the case of Elizabethan and Jacobean England, these conditions were the growth of London; the prominence of the Court;

and the relative freedom and wealth commanded by the ruling elite. These all created conditions that make art possible.

Still, we cannot explain why these opportunities were taken. Even less can we explain why they resulted in the miracles of Shakespeare's *King Lear*, Byrd's *Masses*, Dowland's lute music, Hilliard's miniatures, Jones's Banqueting House, or the King James Bible.

The one place to start—the one place to look—is at the audience for art. In the past, the Church, the Crown, and the court were the three great sources of commissions and subjects. Church patronage had been the chief support for artists in the years prior to the Reformation, but the break with Rome led to the conversion to lay uses of many abbey churches and the destruction of a lot of Church art. Also, remember that crucifixes, stained glass, and other religious images had been proscribed by the Reformation. Here are whole art forms that are no longer viable in England.

Then, there was the financial decline of the Church. Of course, a lot of the wealth that was taken from the Church was deflected into the coffers of the Crown and the aristocracy. Henry VIII took up some of the slack, especially with building, as we'll see below. All the Tudors commissioned new prayer books and other religious literature.

Elizabeth, in particular, was too poor and too frugal to commission much art herself. She did promote tournaments, pageants, and elaborate entries and processions, especially on the anniversary of her accession. She also encouraged or inspired artists to praise her as part of the Gloriana myth—one can think of Spenser's *Faerie Queen* or Camden's *Annals*, or scores of popular ballads all as indirect commissions encouraged by the queen. She might even give the artist a court office or a monopoly, but she rarely paid for any of this stuff herself. In a sense, her subjects were paying for it.

James I was no more wealthy than Elizabeth, but as we'll see, he was far less frugal. He, nevertheless for being no more wealthy, commissioned new palace architecture from Inigo Jones. He also sponsored elaborate theatrical productions called "masques." These were multi-media extravaganzas. They involve writers like Ben Jonson, musicians, dancers,

magnificent sets designed by Jones the architect, and sumptuous costumes, all in a vast allegorical entertainment combining music, dancing, sets, and architecture. The closest thing I can come up with for you today would be those wonderfully over the top Las Vegas shows where the women wear the tall feathers and that sort of thing, the artistic point of which is, of course, completely lost on me.

There was some painting under James I, in which he was encouraged by his son, Prince Charles. The son succeeded as Charles I and became a great connoisseur. He continued production of masques. He also assembled one of the great art collections in Europe—probably the greatest at his death. He ordered his diplomats to scour the great capitals and also commissioned new work from Peter Paul Rubens and Anthony Van Dyck, both of whom he brought to England. He encouraged the musicians of the royal band in the Chapel Royal.

At court, patronage that came from aristocrats and nobles was also always important. They supplemented and sometimes surpassed royal patronage. The court, after all, was full of artists and writers like William Byrd, Nicholas Hilliard, Edmund Spenser, William Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, and later the Cavalier poets. These people might or might not receive a direct commission from the Crown, but they definitely received inspiration from being at court. They were often encouraged to write about some victory or courtly love, or to produce some piece of Panegyric verse for a progress or tournament.

They also sometimes had jobs at court that basically kept body and soul together so that they had the time to produce art. The court was also full of aristocrats. That combination of aristocrats and artists meant that sometimes they came together for commissions without reference to the Crown. Sir Philip Sidney and his sister, the Countess of Pembroke, were great literary patrons. The Earl of Leicester under Elizabeth and the Duke of Buckingham and the Earl of Arundel under Charles I were great collectors. They encouraged diplomats and friends to go on “the Grand Tour” and, like Charles I, bring back European painting, sculpture, furniture, gold, silver and metal work, and tapestry hangings.

Finally, the court in London was the first place where new fashions in art, dress, and manners arrived. Sometimes they'd be brought back by the great collectors noted above or by foreign ambassadors, who were, of course, bringing their fashions and art from home. Sometimes young aristocrats on the Grand Tour were anxious to demonstrate their cosmopolitanism and their good taste, so they informed everybody of the latest fashions.

My point is that even when the Crown was poor or didn't patronize artists directly or very generously, the court still remained the most important center for the production of art. In fact, since there were no public art galleries, the court and the great country houses and churches, which were (in a sense) satellites of the court, were nearly the only places where such art could be experienced.

Fortunately, such buildings were open—in the case of churches—to the general public. In the case of the court and country houses, you might be surprised. Even people toward the middle of the social scale were able to get in if they were dressed well and were able to pass maybe a couple of farthings off to a court servant. This was one way the court servants supplemented their income: by sneaking people into the palace so they could see the king's art collection.

In the following discussion of individual forms of art, which will form the bulk of this lecture, we'll follow the fashions from court to countryside. That is, I'll look at an art form, I'll always start at court, but then I'll always ask the question, "Did it go beyond the confines of the court?"

I'd like to begin with architecture. Generally, architecture—building—is the most dramatic and expensive form of artistic endeavor that churches, kings, and nobles engage in. By 1485, most of the great churches in England had been built. The last great Gothic church built in England was Bath Abbey, completed in the early years of Henry VIII. Henceforward, the only new churches would be small chapels, probably attached to country houses.

Turning to royal patronage, Henry VIII was a great confiscator, builder, and renovator of palaces, including Bridewell, which his son would give to the City of London to use as a workhouse. It wasn't very big. There was

also Hampton Court, Nonesuch, Oatlands, St. James, and, of course, most spectacularly of all, Whitehall.

His Tudor successors were too poor to follow his lead. James I, as we've seen, didn't mind being poor. He thought he was rich. He commissioned Inigo Jones to design the Queen's House at Greenwich and most magnificently, the Banqueting House of Whitehall. Both reflected the new Palladium, or classical, style from Italy. Both were also intended to be the start of much larger projects that never materialized. As a result, Whitehall remained a jumble of buildings and styles. There never was an English Escorial or Versailles. That's going to be important in English history.

Between 1560 and 1610, it was the great aristocrats who did most of the building. They put up magnificent prodigy houses like Robert Cecil's Hatfield, Sir Christopher Hatton's Holdenby, Sir John Thynne's Longleat, and Lord Burghley's Theobalds. Note what all this says about how much money you can make as a court servant. Three out of those four people were all high government officials under Elizabeth.

Some aristocrats also speculated on the London land market. The great example would be the Earls of Bedford building Covent Garden. By the way, remember that the Earls of Bedford are the Russells. One of the reasons when you go to London and you see Russell Square and Bedford Square and all these names associated with the Russells is precisely because they owned—and own—so much of it.

Turning to painting, after Holbein, the Tudor era was not a great one for painting. Elizabeth may have set English painting back—she almost certainly did—by regulating her image so strictly. You'll remember no one is ever supposed to depict her having an emotion or aging.

Her courtiers were vain, however, and they wanted to be memorialized as they were. Nicholas Hilliard in particular produced exquisite miniatures of her court. The Earl of Leicester was a great collector, amassing over 130 portraits. Later, Charles I and his court spurred a renaissance in English art, as we have seen, by collecting and by patronizing artists like Rubens and

Van Dyck. I call your attention in particular to the *Apotheosis of James I*, which Rubens painted for the ceiling of the Banqueting House at Whitehall.

I also call your attention to that great series of paintings of the royal family by Van Dyck. Many of them can be seen at Windsor Castle today. These paintings, along with court masques, conveyed a propaganda image of the king as godlike, serene, and commanding. They were the perfect visual analog to the divine right theory of monarchy that the Stuarts were about to promote. Here's the irony: That message was rarely seen by any but the most aristocratic visitors to Whitehall. Not that many people could get into see the court. Charles and James spent no money and no attention on disseminating their image as Elizabeth had done. This piece of snobbery would help to explain why they wouldn't experience the same degree of popularity as she did. That helps to explain what happened in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

Let me put it this way, very simply and a little crudely: Elizabeth paid more attention to propaganda than art. James and Charles paid more attention to art than propaganda. There's an important difference.

Increasingly, ordinary people could purchase woodcuts and cheap broadsides (pieces of paper printed) that depicted the queen and other important courtiers, or great events like the Armada victory.

What about music? It was distributed a little more widely. Here too, the court was the prime center of artistic production. There was sacred music. The Chapel Royal was the greatest center for the production and performance of this kind of music in the country. It employed talented musicians like William Byrd and Orlando Gibbons, who wrote magnificent chorale anthems for royal services. These were then borrowed by English cathedrals and Church choirs, so there's a dissemination from court in this case.

Interestingly, Byrd was a lifelong Roman Catholic who wrote masses on the sides for little groups of secret recusants who would perform them in country houses. Elizabeth knew this, but she protected him. Remember, she didn't want to make "windows into men's souls." She knew a great composer when she heard one. She wasn't going to lose William Byrd.



Turning to secular music, starting under Charles I, there was the king's Band of Violins. This was the first real orchestra in the country. Before that, you couldn't hear massed instrumental music. It and other court musical groups produced sophisticated dance music for performance at masques and in the theater. Since there were no concert halls, the court was still the only place where you could hear this kind of music played by large ensembles.

For quieter hours, individual musicians like Byrd, Gibbons, and John Dowland produced songs and works for viols and keyboard like Byrd's *Susanna Fair*, Gibbons's *The Silver Swan*, Dowland's *Fortune My Foe*, *Flow My Tears*, and *Come Heavy Sleep*, and numerous fantasias, pavanés, galliards, and jigs. Most of these, as you can tell, were based on dance forms.

As these titles indicate, a lot of this music, like so many Elizabethan sonnet cycles, embraced a kind of courtly melancholy. These people seem to have been obsessed with two things: one, their failure to win court favor, and two, unrequited love. Much of this music was printed, and therefore it was played beyond the court in parish churches and private homes. Here the court's message got out as well.

Below the level of the elite, towns maintained minstrels and what were called "waits" to perform at ceremonial occasions. They might perform wind and even brass music on ceremonial occasions. Ordinary people sang and played folk songs and ballads in taverns, and sang carols and hymns in church. Note the indication of rising literacy if you can read the words to a carol. Strolling minstrels and ballad singers made a living by singing at fairs and markets.

In 1606, one critic complained that most people knew more about Robin Hood and other figures from ballads than they did the Bible. In fact, with the Reformation, many popular holidays lost their religious significance, but that doesn't mean they lost their hold on the people. Two of my favorite holidays, and people's at the time, were Valentine's Day and May Day. The religious associations with them went out the window with the Reformation. They became an excuse for singing, drinking, and playing sports.

Valentine's Day was an excuse to accost the first person you saw in the morning and ask them to be your Valentine and that always implied a kiss.

This explains why Sam Pepys' wife Elizabeth was careful all Valentine's Day morning in 1662, "That she might not see the painters that were at work in my dining room." These are not the people she wanted to kiss.

May Day became an excuse for frolicking and flirting around a may pole, the phallic significance of which was quite obvious to Puritan reformers, who tried to ban all of this fun.

I suppose the most notorious activity that began as a Catholic religious ritual and was now thought to be licentious, by Puritans at least, was the theater. Drama is of course the art form most associated with Elizabethan and Jacobean England. The first plays in English were religious mystery plays. They were performed as part of Church services. Then there were mummers' plays, which were associated with feasts and festivals.

During the 16<sup>th</sup> century, strolling bands of players began to put on short interludes in private houses, like say, Thomas More's house. By the beginning of Elizabeth's reign, full five-act plays were being put on at the universities and at the inns of court (the London law schools), especially during Christmas revels.

They would invite Elizabeth to these, and she liked them. That explains why, in 1579, she established the office of the Master of the Revels. She also began to sponsor a group of players, the Queen's Men, as did other court nobles like Leicester. This was important because the Poor Law of 1572 actually outlawed "common players in interludes and minstrels not belonging to any baron of the realm." These people were considered to be vagrants and criminals, so it was very important to have that royal protection.

Actors were disliked by the authorities, not just because they wandered about the country. These shows were thought to distract ordinary people from their work or from learning useful pursuits like archery, which might be useful to an English monarch. The London authorities were especially hostile because the plays brought people together in large crowds, and they had no means to control crowds. They were worried about disease. They were worried about unlicensed speech. Possibly, if the play hit current events just right, it might be an incitement to rebellion. The Earl of Essex had *Richard II*,

Shakespeare's history play, put on just before his rebellion in 1601. Why? To inspire the troops.

For this reason, the earliest public theaters were established outside of the jurisdiction of the London authorities. The Red Lion was built north of the city in Whitechapel in 1567; the Theater in Shoreditch in 1577; the Rose in Southwark also in 1577; and finally, the Globe in Southwark in 1598. The last two were large open-air theaters. Here, all of London could be entertained, unlike in the court productions, which of course had a restricted audience. These theaters attracted aristocrats who sat in the boxes; the middling orders, who sat just below; and of course, most famously, the "groundlings," who paid just perhaps a penny to be at stage level.

Under the management of opportunistic impresarios like Richard Burbage, a half dozen talented playwrights churned out new work. Christopher Marlowe wrote *Dr. Faustus*, *Tamburlaine*, and *Edward II*. Ben Jonson wrote *Sejanus*, *Volpone*, *The Alchemist*, and *Bartholemew Fair*. William Shakespeare wrote history plays like *Richard II*, *Richard III*, and the *Henriads*; comedies like *Much Ado About Nothing* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*; and, of course, the great tragedies: *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *King Lear*, and *Romeo and Juliet*.

No historian and possibly no scholar can do full justice to, let alone explain, the genius, dramatic power, beauty of language, and insight into the human condition demonstrated by that player from Stratford-on-Avon. Perhaps the one thing I can do is reassert that Shakespeare really was Shakespeare. That is, there is no compelling evidence linking his plays to anyone else, least of all Christopher Marlowe or the Earl of Oxford, both of which labor under the disadvantage that they were actually dead during the second half of Shakespeare's career. You would think that this would pose problems for their supposed authorship.

Contrary to popular belief, Shakespeare is actually pretty well documented for someone of his class. Put another way, we don't know very much about anybody below the level of the aristocracy. It's clear to me from Jonson's elegy "to the memory of my beloved master, William Shakespeare" and from the testimony of *The First Folio*, which his fellow players gathered

together to get published, that they revered him for the genius that he was, to quote Jonson, “Not for an age, but for all time.”

In my own opinion, the idea that Shakespeare didn’t write Shakespeare is just a piece of snobbery. It’s based on the assumption that an English country boy with a grammar school education and the cadences of the Geneva Bible and the Book of Common Prayer ringing in his ears couldn’t have done it. As Jonson says, “A good poet’s made as well as born.”

In fact, maybe that grammar school education and the Book of Common Prayer are actually the key to explaining why there was a Shakespeare. What made Shakespeare possible, and indeed so much of the art of his contemporaries, was a combination of circumstances specific to his time and place: the endowment of competent grammar schools out of monastic wealth (here we can thank the Reformation for giving us Shakespeare); the creation of an audience with a critical mass of money and people in London (the old “bottoms in the seats” problem); royal patronage and protection; and above all, I think the most important factor is the development of the English language to a point of sufficient refinement to be powerful yet subtle, yet also clear enough to be comprehensible by the aristocrat and the groundling.

Ultimately, I would argue, the most powerful and lasting achievement of Elizabethan, Jacobean, and Caroline England is the perfection of the English language. It was during this time that English became eloquent, expressive, and comprehensible in a wide variety of genres. The refinement of English was spurred by lots of factors, including the theological controversies of the divorce and the Reformation, and the increasing use of the printing press. Some 800 books were published in the 1520s, which grew to 3,000 by the 1590s. There was the growth in schooling and the rise of literacy: While only 8 percent of household inventories in Canterbury had books in the 1560s, by the 1620s, that number was 45 percent. Almost half of the people in Canterbury had books. Most of these books are little known today, but a few live on.

The eloquence of English was demonstrated in philosophical, theological, and historical works—by Francis Bacon in his *Essays* of 1597 and 1625, *The Advancement of Learning* in 1605, and in *The New Atlantis* in 1626; John

Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, which we've mentioned; and Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles* of 1577. Richard Hooker wrote the *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* for most of the later part of Elizabeth's reign. Sir Walter Raleigh wrote a *History of the World*.

There was travel literature by Richard Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations and Voyages of the English Nation*. William Camden wrote *Britannia* in Latin in 1686 [sic 1587], and it was translated into English in 1610.

Of course, there was the poetry, wasn't there? There was Shakespeare and his sonnets and Sir Philip Sidney with *Arcadia* and *Astrophel and Stella*. Edmund Spenser wrote *The Faerie Queen*. Michael Drayton wrote epics. There was metaphysical poetry by men like John Donne, George Herbert, and the Cavalier poets a little bit later in the period, like Abraham Cowley and Sir John Suckling.

In a lighter vein, there was the satire of Thomas Nash and the doggerel of John Taylor, the "water poet." He was called the water poet not because he wrote about water, but because he was a London waterman who wrote poetry on the side. Or was it that he was a London waterman on the side?

If one had to sum up the Elizabethan and Jacobean achievement in language, I think one could do no better than to settle for the authorized, or King James, version of the Bible of 1611. This new translation was commissioned by King James I in 1604. It was labored over by a committee of bishops for seven years, though it should be pointed out that it was heavily reliant on previous translations: the Coverdale and Tyndale translation that Cromwell had ordered into the churches, the Geneva Bible, and the Bishops' Bible.

The King James presented Scripture in immortal prose that still resonates through our language, from the eloquent simplicity of its opening, "In the beginning." Take this passage from Isaiah foretelling the coming of a savior and set many years later by George Frideric Handel in his oratory of that name. Consider how it would have spoken to a people who thought themselves God's own garrison against the papal anti-Christ and his Spanish minions:

Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.

Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned ...

The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill made low, the crooked ... and the rough places plain:

And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed ...

The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined ...

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

Modern translations are more faithful to the Aramaic and the Greek, and they're more accessible to the modern reader, but make no mistake, it was language like that that convinced the English people that they were the people who had seen the great light and that their struggles against Spain, Catholicism, and the devil were biblical, if not downright apocalyptic.

I'm going to have to ask you to interpret all of the rest of the lectures of this course through that prism. Whenever there's a Catholic plot or whenever the French or Spanish king is on the rampage in Europe, remember that they've been reading their Bible and their Book of Common Prayer and they believe that they're being called by Gabriel's trumpet to stand in the way of these incursions. This is powerful stuff.

It shouldn't surprise us that even here in the area of language, art, and culture, English men and women in 1603 worried. They worried about

disorder. Such an eloquent and powerful language could inspire or inflame. The printing press and rising literacy, which spread the word of God or the proclamations of the king, might just as well spread more dangerous ideas, such as the Puritan notion that they should be free to interpret that word as they saw fit.

The Crown and the ruling elite tried to manipulate the English language to their own ends. We've seen some of this. All the monarchs of this period knew the importance of propaganda. They encouraged artists, writers, builders, etc., to portray them in the best possible light. Elizabeth carefully regulated her image so as to create the myth of Gloriana. Thus, James I and Charles I sought to have themselves portrayed in masques and in portraits as divinely appointed rulers. We've also seen they gave less thought to how that image was disseminated to the general populace.

There was also censorship. After flirting with a free press under Edward VI, the government enacted strict censorship. Statutes of 1549 and 1554 forbade the publishing of heretical or seditious books. In the 1580s, with fears of Catholic plots, this became a capital offense.

In 1586, Star Chamber decreed that all non-university printing presses had to be based in London and licensed by the Stationer's Company. All books had to be licensed by the bishops. They were serious about this. In 1593, John Henry was executed for publishing a series of Puritan tracts critical of the bishops. By the way, his pen name is, I think, one more indication of the versatility and wit of the English language. He signed his tracts Martin Marprelate—"Martin Mar Prelate."

In this lecture, we've attempted to explain how, and perhaps why, the Elizabethan and Jacobean ages are often seen as the first great high-water mark of English culture. We've argued that developments in the political, religious, and social world did affect how and why and what art was produced, from the Crown's abandonment of expensive buildings, to the Reformation spur, to the development of the English language.

For most of the century, that language had been used to glorify, edify, and entertain the men and women who ruled England. But so powerful and

eloquent a language was a double-edged sword. If the language of the King James Bible could be used by kings to justify their divine right to rule, it might just as easily be used to challenge that rule within the Parliament House and beyond its doors.

In the next lecture, we begin to examine that challenge.



# Establishing the Stuart Dynasty: 1603–25

## Lecture 28

**It could be argued that the great achievement of the Tudor state was not the defeat of the Spanish Armada. ... Rather, the great triumph of the Tudor state—the final proof that the Wars of the Roses were really over—was the peaceful accession of the Stuarts in 1603. That is, despite war with Spain, division at home, and an ambiguous claim to the throne, James VI of Scotland was duly proclaimed King James I of England on 24 March 1603 without a murmur of dissent.**

**T**he central event of this course is, arguably, a series of civil wars experienced in the British Isles in the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The next five lectures will attempt to explain how and why they happened. Historians of the British Civil Wars have long argued about their causes. Older historians, labeled Whigs after the later political party that favored parliamentary rights, often saw every government policy, parliamentary debate, or local protest as part of a continuous struggle, culminating in civil war, between Stuart autocracy on the one hand and popular democracy on the other. This interpretation grew popular in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as liberal ideas and representative institutions seemed to triumph everywhere.

During the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Marxist historians saw the British Civil Wars as a crucial stage in the dialectic of history, part of a long-term struggle between the land-owning and merchant classes that dated back to the Middle Ages. At about the same time, historians influenced by Max Weber associated the wars with the rise of Puritanism. In their view, the Puritan emphasis on individual conscience, rationality, and property inevitably clashed with Stuart notions of divine right and unquestioning obedience. More recently, revisionist historians have argued against all these interpretations: The Civil Wars were never inevitable; nor were there any insoluble or “long-term” problems. No one foresaw or wanted civil war or consciously sought to increase the power of the monarchy or Parliament at the expense of the other. Rather, king and Parliament sought cooperation and consensus.

In any case, Parliament met rarely. Most political business was done under the king's eye at court. No one group in English society was homogeneous in its views. It is, therefore, ridiculous to see "the merchants" or "the Puritans" as having a political program. Generally, revisionists see the British Civil Wars as arising from the fact that the Stuarts ruled three kingdoms (England, Scotland, Ireland) with very different constitutional systems, religious settlements, and cultures. Still, the breakdown came suddenly, not as a result of long-term forces. In my view, the British Civil Wars did not happen overnight. Although king and Parliament, Anglican and Puritan, landowner and merchant did seek unity, not conflict or advantage, there were five long-term areas of tension left over from the Tudors over which they could not agree. That disagreement eventually overwhelmed the early Stuart polity. These areas of disagreement were

- The problem of sovereignty: Is the king above the law or subordinate to it? What should be the respective, proper roles of king and Parliament? When push comes to shove, who decides on policy?
- The problem of government finance: Does the king have a preemptive right to the property of his subjects? How should the government pay for itself? What role should it play in the national economy?
- The problem of war and foreign policy: What is England's proper role in Europe? Should the English taxpayer support a more active role?
- The problem of religion: What should the state religion of England be? Should other faith traditions be tolerated? Who makes religious policy: king, Parliament, the bishops, local communities, or a combination of all four? What should be the answers to these questions for Scotland and Ireland?
- The problem of local control: What is the proper relationship between the central government in London and the English

localities? What should be the relationship between that government and those of Scotland and Ireland?

To this, we might add the problem of royal personality: Where the Tudors were skillful at papering over or postponing these issues, the early Stuarts often misunderstood the political and religious cultures of their three kingdoms, exacerbating these tensions. (Here, we concentrate on the first two areas of tension, along with that of royal personality.)

On the surface, there was no problem of sovereignty in early modern England. The sovereign was sovereign. He had the power to make peace or war, to grant titles and appoint government officials, and to direct how government monies should be spent. Under Henry VIII, he acquired additional powers as supreme head of the Church of England. But he had acquired the last through parliamentary legislation. After the Reformation, Parliament claimed some responsibility for religious matters. It retained the power to petition the king for redress of grievance and to approve or reject taxation. Given that English monarchs tended to have their own agendas in these areas, the potential for conflict was real.

Early in the Stuart period, these tensions manifested themselves around the king's relationship to the law. Was the king above the law? Could he break it with impunity? Whose interests did Parliament serve, king or people? Contemporaries liked to believe that these were identical, but what if they were not? Queen Elizabeth had dealt with these issues by using her power to veto legislation and prorogue, or dismiss, Parliaments; by using her powers of persuasion; or by ignoring Parliaments. James I (1603–1625) has had bad press, in part because he had an unconventional personality for a monarch. Unlike the Tudors, James I was not warlike; rather, he styled himself a *Rex Pacificus*. Like Elizabeth, he was a tolerant man who had no desire to harry Catholics or Puritans if they were loyal. Like the Tudors, he was intelligent and well educated, publishing on many subjects, including the divine right of kings. James told Parliament, "The state of monarchy is the supremest thing upon earth . . . for Kings are . . . God's lieutenants on earth and sit upon God's throne." The Tudors certainly believed this, but they would never have actually said it.

Unlike the Tudors, James I did not look much like a surrogate for the Supreme Being: His appearance was ungainly and he spoke with a lisp, a stutter, and a thick Scots accent, which offended English prejudices. Above all, James's behavior contrasted with the Tudors. He was informal and affable. This put people at ease but also reduced their fear. He hated crowds. He grew lazy, leaving government to his ministers while he hunted or spent time with favorites. His favorites tended to be handsome young men, on whom he lavished offices, titles, lands, and affection. Many of these traits, acceptable in our own day, offended his conservative contemporaries and made it more difficult for him to get along with Parliament. He clashed with the first Parliament of the reign in 1604 over who had the right to determine the legality of elections to the House of Commons.

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**[James I] was informal and affable. This put people at ease but also reduced their fear.**

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The king's difficulties with Parliament were exacerbated by his financial problems. Many of these problems were not James's fault. James's reign was bracketed by two periods of famine (the 1590s and 1620s) and subject to rapid inflation. He inherited a corrupt and inefficient administration and revenue system. Unlike Elizabeth, James had a wife and children who would need their own courts. James inherited an expectant and rapacious court, anxious for a more generous royal patron. James inherited a debt of £365,000, or one year's expenditure.

Having spent most of his life ruling a relatively poor country, James made up for lost time by spending English money on magnificent buildings, elaborate masques, and his favorites. The royal debts rose to £600,000 in 1608, then to £900,000 by 1618, on an annual revenue of perhaps £300,000. Parliament, aware of where the money was going, refused to raise taxes significantly in 1610, 1614, and 1621. James refused to cut his expenses, because favorites and courtiers fought hard against it, and it went against his profligate nature. By 1621, the king's debts stood at £1,000,000, and city loans were drying up. ■

## Suggested Reading

Bucholz and Key, *Early Modern England*, chap. 7, opening and secs. 1–2.

Coward, *The Stuart Age*, chaps. 1–4.

Kishlansky, *Monarchy Transformed*, chaps. 1–3.

Lockyer, *Early Stuarts*, chaps. 1–2, 4–5.

## Questions to Consider

1. Why do you suppose the five areas of tension outlined above became more pressing under the Stuarts than they were under the Tudors?
2. How would the personality and policies of James I fare with the public today? Would he be a successful leader?

# Establishing the Stuart Dynasty: 1603–25

## Lecture 28—Transcript

Over the last eight lectures, we have examined English society and culture at the political midpoint of this course, the transition from the Tudors to the Stuarts. It should be obvious by now that the later 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> centuries were a period of transition in the lives of all English men and women, not just politicians. The new king would have to lead a people laboring under inexorable inflation, increasing poverty, more crime, more literacy, tensions in religion, greater diversity of thought, the growth of London, all sorts of strains on the Great Chain of Being, and even an extended period of cooling in northern Europe called the “Little Ice Age.” Add to this the war with Spain and the general sense of malaise and dissatisfaction with royal government in the 1590s, and whoever ascended the English throne in 1603 would have faced immense challenges.

This lecture turns back to the political narrative to examine the beginnings of Stuart rule under James I and the tensions that threaten to overwhelm the state he inherited from the Tudors. In particular, it addresses the most basic of those tensions: the problem of sovereignty and how it was affected by the new king’s unconventional personality. Would the new king fit the English court?

It could be argued that the great achievement of the Tudor state was not the defeat of the Spanish Armada. After all, that was as much a matter of luck as pluck, and the weather in the North Sea as competence at Whitehall. Rather, the great triumph of the Tudor state—the final proof that the Wars of the Roses were really over—was the peaceful accession of the Stuarts in 1603. That is, despite war with Spain, division at home, and an ambiguous claim to the throne, James VI of Scotland was duly proclaimed King James I of England on 24 March 1603 without a murmur of dissent.

Just compare his peaceful accession to that of the two previous royal houses in England. While Edward IV and Henry VII had had to rush to London to claim their crowns after winning them on the field of blood, James had won his through delicate negotiation with a government functionary, Secretary Cecil, who retained his job into the new regime. While Cecil and the Tudor

administration ran the country, the new king undertook a leisurely progress south, entering London in April 1603 to crowds who cheered because they were rather tired of the miserly old woman who'd ruled them for so long. They were happy to see a new royal line.

Yet, who within that crowd could have guessed that within two generations, the son of this very king would walk through these same streets, not to cheers, but to stony silence save the muffled drums of a military guard? He walked not to a crown, but to a block, where he would be executed on the order of Parliament in the name of the very people who now acclaimed his father.

Who could have guessed that the first two Stuart reigns would culminate in a series of bloody Civil Wars, which would destroy the old Tudor state? The next four lectures will attempt to explain how and why that happened. Before doing so, it might be best to explain to you how other historians have explained it and why I think they're wrong.

Historians of the British Civil Wars have long argued, often vehemently, about their causes. Because hindsight is 20-20, older historians found it impossible to write about the early Stuarts without seeing everything as contributing to their disastrous end. That is, they saw every government policy, every parliamentary debate, every local protest in Stuart England as some inevitable step toward the Civil War—part of a continuous struggle between the forces of Stuart autocracy on the one hand and the forces of liberalism and popular democracy on the other. This interpretation has been labeled Whig, after a political party that developed later in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and that favored the rights of Parliament over those of the king.

In fact, the Whig interpretation grew especially popular in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as liberal ideas and representative institutions seemed to be triumphing everywhere, especially in Europe and the Americas. These historians couldn't help but see the seeds of their triumph—the beginnings of democracy—in the struggle to overthrow the despotic Stuarts.

During the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Marxist historians saw the British Civil Wars a little differently. They saw them as a crucial stage in the

dialectic of history, that is, part of a long-term struggle dating back to the Middle Ages. This struggle was between a feudal aristocracy—the land-owning classes—trying to maintain hegemony on the one hand, and a rising class of merchants trying to seize that hegemony and remake England into a bourgeois society on the other.

Then, about the same time, a group of historians influenced by Max Weber associated the wars with the rise of an aggressive Puritanism. In the Weberian formulation, the Puritan emphasis on individual conscience, rationality, and property laid the seeds for modern liberalism and capitalism, which inevitably clashed with Stuart notions of divine right and unquestioning obedience.

The trouble with all these interpretations is exactly that hindsight is 20-20. That is, they interpret the past as if its inhabitants had a “long-term” goal in mind and that long-term goal was to be us. More recent historians, labeled “revisionist,” examining a broader array of sources a lot more carefully, have argued against all these interpretations. First, revisionists argue that the Civil Wars were never inevitable, not in 1588, not in 1603, and not even in 1640. A different education or personality for Prince Charles, that son of James I; different ministers or parliamentary leaders; or a slowdown of the inflation we’ve been talking about for the last eight lectures would all have had different effects.

Secondly, they argue that no one wanted or foresaw civil war. No one was consciously seeking to overthrow the power of the monarchy or raise Parliament at its expense or vice versa. That is, and I think we can bear this out from our examination of the last eight lectures, the English people were for the most part a pretty conservative lot. They didn’t see themselves as oppressed. They didn’t harbor long-cherished hopes of overturning the monarchy. They didn’t want to be us.

Admittedly, they did want the king to rule, and they wanted him to rule wisely and justly with respect for the law. Even when Stuart kings were perceived as not doing so, it took the English people a long time to take up arms against them, and they always did so reluctantly. Rather, according to the revisionists, king and Parliament sought cooperation and consensus.



In any case, Parliament met rarely. Most political business was done under the king's eye at court. This whole notion of Parliament versus the court is, according to the revisionists, nonsense.

Their third point is that no one group in English society was homogenous in its makeup or views. It's ridiculous to talk about the merchants, the Puritans, or even Parliament as having a political program. Of course, if you asked three merchants, you'd get three different answers on these questions.

Generally, revisionists see the causes of the British Civil Wars, to the extent that they see causes at all, in the fact that the Stuarts ruled three kingdoms—England, Scotland, and Ireland—with very different constitutional systems, religious settlements, and cultures. They would nevertheless stress that the Stuarts ruled those kingdoms pretty successfully for close to half a century, and that the breakdown therefore came suddenly, not as a result of long-term forces that had been building up for generations.

Your historian does not entirely agree. In my view, the British Civil Wars did not happen overnight. I accept that king and Parliament, Anglican and Puritan, landowner and merchant did seek unity, not conflict or advantage. But I do see five long-term areas of tension that were left over from the Tudors—in fact, you might be able to connect a lot of them up with Henry VIII—over which people simply could not agree. That disagreement overwhelmed the early Stuart polity in the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

Here they are. I would urge you to take careful note of them, because we will be coming back to these five areas of tension from now until the end of the course. First: the problem of sovereignty, law, and council. What is the king's relationship to the law? Is he above it or subordinate to it? Who primarily should advise the king: courtiers, councilors, or Parliament? Later, what should be the proper respective roles of king and Parliament? When push comes to shove, who decides on policy? That's a later question; they weren't asking that yet.

Second: the problem of government finance and the economy. How should royal government pay for itself? Does the king have a preemptive right

to the property of his subjects? What role should the Crown play in the national economy?

Third: the problem of war and foreign policy. What is England's proper role in Europe? Should the English taxpayer support a more active role?

Fourth: the problem of religion. What should the state religion of England be? Should other faith traditions be tolerated? Who makes religious policy: king, Parliament, the bishops, local communities, or some combination of all four? What should the answers to those questions be for Scotland and Ireland?

Five: the problem of local control. What is the proper relationship between the central government in London and the English localities? What should that relationship be between the government and those of Scotland and Ireland?

I want to be careful here. It would be going too far to say that these five issues caused the British Civil Wars or that they very often divided the king from his subjects, but they were there. So long as they remained unresolved, they had the potential to provoke conflict. At this point, I might add the problem of royal personality. Where the Tudors were skillful at papering over, postponing, or winning temporary consensus on these issues, the early Stuarts often misunderstood the political and religious cultures of their three kingdoms. They exacerbated these tensions. As a result, the potential for conflict was realized violently in Scotland in 1637, in Ireland in 1641, and in England in 1642.

The present lecture will concentrate on the first, and arguably the most basic, area of tension: that of sovereignty. As we'll see, it's inseparable from the issue of royal personality.

The problem of sovereignty, law, and council: On the surface, there was no problem with sovereignty in England. The sovereign was sovereign. According to the Great Chain of Being, he was chosen by the Supreme Being himself to wield God's own authority, answering to no one but the Almighty. The king had the power to make peace or war, to make or unmake men by

granting them titles and appointing government officials, and to tax their goods and direct how government monies should be spent. Moreover, Henry VIII had acquired jurisdiction over his subjects' very souls as Supreme Head of the Church of England.

Remember, he had acquired the last through parliamentary legislation. Parliament had long claimed the right to petition the king for redress of grievances and to approve or reject taxation. You remember those claims date back to the very beginning of this course and before. After the Reformation, Parliament felt that it also had some responsibility in religious matters.

The power of the Crown and Parliament had increased simultaneously. This was only paradoxical if you saw these two branches of government as being at odds with each other. No one thought that in 1603. Still, since English monarchs tended to have their own agendas in all these areas (remember how much Queen Elizabeth "loves" having to listen to Parliament), the potential for conflict was real.

Early in the Stuart period, these tensions manifested themselves around the king's relationship to the law. Some very simple questions arose: Was the king above the law, or was he subject to it? Since the king was the fountain of the law and all law was the king's law, could he break his own law? Tudor and Stuart monarchs tried to get around the question by pledging in their coronation oaths to govern within the law. But what if they broke that promise? What if Parliament or the people disagreed with the king's interpretation of what breaking the law actually was?

That raises a deeper question. Whose interests did Parliament serve: the king's or the people's? Contemporaries, of course, would have said that the two interests were identical—there's no point in even asking the question. What if they were not? If Parliament's ultimate responsibility was to the people of England, did this not charge them with the duty or give them the right to disagree with the king when he pursued policies that in their view harmed the commonweal? If so, might such disagreement raise the even deeper issue of who or what was the sovereign power in England?

Again, I want to back up. Few people in England had thought all this through in 1603. Queen Elizabeth had dealt with these issues by asserting her power to veto legislation; proroguing, or dismissing, parliaments; and of course, using her immense powers of persuasion. When that didn't work, she ignored them or postponed their resolution.

As a result, she left her successor a country still grumbling over monopolies, purveyance, and wardship; still at war with Spain; still divided in religion; still suffering from a depressed economy; a revenue still inadequate and growing more so due to inflation; courtiers still greedy and left unsatisfied by the frugal woman who'd just departed the throne; and, of course, a Parliament that felt competent to raise all these matters with their sovereign.

One of my favorite moments in the recent film *Elizabeth* comes at the end of the movie when, just before the credits, the statement is flashed on the screen something to the effect of, "And at Elizabeth's death, England was the greatest nation in Europe," which would only be true if France, Spain, and the Holy Roman Empire didn't exist. At Elizabeth's death, England was in much better shape than 1558, but it was still a mess.

What sort of man inherited Eliza's problems along with Eliza's throne? How would he handle them? James Stuart, the only offspring of the ill-fated union between Mary Queen of Scots and Lord Darnley, has had a bad press among English historians, in part because he had an unconventional personality for a king, especially after the forthright authoritarianism of the Tudors. Unlike the Tudors, James I was not a military man. In fact, he was once frightened by gunfire on the Isle of Wight, which turned out to be the royal military salute. Rather, James styled himself a *Rex Pacificus*, who would bring concord not only to his three kingdoms, but to all the monarchs of Europe. He wanted to be a great moderator.

As this implies, James I was a tolerant man, who like Elizabeth had no desire to harry Catholics or Puritans if they were loyal. In both of these things, the new king was ahead of his time and therefore ahead of his people. That is a bad place to be for a king. His failure to enforce the penal laws against his Catholic subjects or engage in military adventures against the Catholic powers wouldn't play well with most of his subjects. Still, as this implies,

James was flexible and willing to compromise. He proved especially good at balancing off factions, which he had done very successfully as a King of Scotland for two decades. He was a very successful King of Scotland, perhaps the most successful one of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

Like the Tudors, James I was intelligent and well educated. He fancied himself a scholar, publishing on many subjects. He wrote a *Demonology*, he wrote *A Counterblast to Tobacco*, which we've referred to, and most famously, he wrote two works on the divine right of kings, *The True Law of Free Monarchies* and a book called the *Basilicon Doron*, or the "King's Gift." These were published between 1598 and 1599, but just so that no one missed the point, they were reissued in 1603, the year he ascended the throne.

James believed passionately in the divine right of kings, proclaiming it in print and in the following speech to Parliament in 1610. As you listen to the speech, I'd like you to hear in your minds another speech. Remember Queen Elizabeth's Golden Speech and how she spoke to Parliament?

Listen to this:

The state of Monarchy is the supremest thing upon earth: for kings are not only God's lieutenants upon earth and sit upon God's throne, but even by God himself they are called gods. ... That as to dispute what God may do is a blasphemy ... so is it sedition in subjects to dispute what a king may do in the height of his power...I will not be content that my power be disputed upon, but I shall ever be willing to make the reason appear of all my doings, and rule my actions according to my laws.

Do not meddle with the main points of government; that is my craft. I am now an old king. I must not be taught my office.

You understand, don't you, that the Tudors believed every word of this, but Elizabeth, in particular, would never have said it. Compare it with the Golden Speech, where she's constantly complimenting them and telling them how much she loves them, and then not doing what they want her to

do. Still, James might have gotten away with saying all this if he had looked or acted a little bit more like a surrogate for the Supreme Being.

It was not James's fault, of course, that he was a rather odd-looking man. He had spindly legs in an age when a shapely calf became a man. Those legs supported an ungainly body crowned by an overly large head. That head housed a tongue, which itself was too big for his mouth, which caused a pronounced lisp. The lisp exacerbated a stutter and a thick Scots accent. All of this might be overlooked in our own day and age, or even celebrated in the name of diversity, but not in James's day. It is an unfortunate comment on human nature: Appearance really does matter. In this case, the contrast with the Tudors' regal bearing could not play to James's advantage.

Then, there was James's Scots heritage. This was particularly difficult for English men and women to stomach, who thought of their northern neighbors as rude, impoverished brigands. It didn't help that James came south accompanied by an entourage of what were called the "hungry Scots." These were Scottish courtiers who, it was thought, would see England as a vast treasure house to plunder.

Above all, James's personal behavior contrasted with the Tudors. He was remarkably informal and affable, but with a poor head for drink. His friendliness put people at ease and brought disaffected people back to court. His openness ensured that he often knew what his enemies were thinking because they would tell him, but it also reduced their fear. Compare this to the Tudors' ability to keep friend and foe off balance.

He hated crowds, and he rarely went out amongst his loyal subjects. Once, when told that a group of them had gathered to express their love for him, he replied with characteristic earthiness, "God's wounds! I will pull down my breeches and show them my arse!"

In his later years, he grew lazy, leaving government to ministers with whom he didn't always communicate, while he hunted or spent time with his favorites.

Then, there was the matter of the favorites themselves. James was married to Anne of Denmark. Though they had several children, some of whom we'll meet in the next few lectures, he seems to have preferred the company of handsome young men on whom he lavished offices, titles, lands, and affection—often public affection. Thus, one Puritan gentleman reported his shock after observing the king with his favorites: “Kissing them after so lascivious a mode in public has prompted many to imagine some things done in the tiring-house that exceed my expression.”

We have to be careful here. It's a little too easy to claim that James I was England's first certifiably gay king. In fact, the issue is very murky. Unconventional sexuality was, in the eyes of the contemporary Church and most of its congregants, a heinous, even unspeakable, sin. Because it was an unspeakable sin, people didn't usually speak about it, especially when it had to do with the king. Moreover, I would argue that Early-modern people constructed their sexuality differently from us. Activities that would be suggestive of something in our own day and age—two people of the same gender sharing a bed or perhaps public caressing—did not necessarily mean the same thing that they would mean to us.

What we can say is that the king's physical affection for his favorites contrasted sharply with the bluff masculinity of the Tudors—of course I mean all the Tudors, even the female ones.

In conclusion, it should be obvious that many of the king's personality traits would have been perfectly acceptable in our own day. I think an argument can be made that compared to Henry VIII, Mary, or Henry VII, who would you rather invite to dinner? In the context of his times and office, James's manner was problematic. It clearly offended his more conservative contemporaries who were used to the Tudors. This made it more difficult for him to overawe Parliament, as they would have done. Every time he tells them that he's God on earth, they're snickering.

The first Parliament of the reign met in 1604. It's clear that some MPs were gunning for the new king. Some hoped that James would do something about monopolies, purveyance, and the Catholics, upon which they claimed

not to have pressed Elizabeth, “In consideration of her age and sex.” In other words, “We held off on those issues; we’ve been waiting for you.”

Others were worried about James’s divine right theories. In particular, there was a group around Sir Edward Coke who drew upon recent historical research by William Camden, William Lambard, and John Selden. That research argued that the English constitution, and Parliament’s privileges in particular, derived not from the king but from the Common Law. You’ll remember that the Common Law is the amalgamated custom that has accrued over the centuries in matters of law and precedent. Know what they’re arguing here: They’re saying that Parliament itself predates the king. It’s part of something they call the “ancient constitution of England.” That is, they thought that Parliament was the direct descendant of the Anglo-Saxon witan, which was a council that met in support of Anglo-Saxon kings. In their interpretation of history, the witan actually used to elect those kings.

If Parliament is really the witan, and the witan used to elect kings, look what that implies. Look what that might imply about the question of sovereignty. The king’s supremacy was, according to this history, a later imposition of William the Conqueror, who got rid of a lot of Anglo-Saxon traditions. They called this the “Norman yoke.”

One can only imagine what James would think of this. By the way, I should take a time-out and explain as a historian that this is all nonsense. Parliament was created by kings. Parliament has nothing to do with the witan. There’s no connection with the Anglo-Saxon witan, but of course, historical research had not advanced to a sufficient place that it could know that. These men were depending upon the best history of their day, and this is what it told them.

These various groups got their chance to make their first point in the very first Parliament of the reign, which met in 1604. They made their point over the seating of Sir Francis Goodwin in the House of Commons. Goodwin had won his election, but he had been declared by the Court of Chancery an outlaw because he had an unpaid debt that somebody was chasing him for. In law, that meant that Goodwin should not sit in the House of Commons. Remember, it’s a royal court that said that. The House of Commons wanted



to assert its right to sit Goodwin, because they would argue that they should be responsible for deciding who their members are.

At this point, James makes a rash declaration. It's rash because he's only been in the country a year and he doesn't understand Parliament well. He declares that parliamentary privileges, like that to regulate membership, come from him. The more radical members of Parliament responded with a document called the *Apology of the House of Commons*. It has to be one of the most misnamed documents in history because it's anything but apologetic. Listen to this: "We most truly avouch that our privileges and our liberties are our rights and due inheritance no less than our very lands and goods. They cannot be withheld from us, denied or impaired, but with apparent wrong to the whole state of the realm."

I want to note three things here. First, this is the first significant use of that word "rights" and the first significant assertion of rights (indeed, the very concept of even having rights independent of the king) by Parliament. In fact, as I said, history was on James's side. The ancient constitution was nonsense. Parliament had been created in the Middle Ages by kings as a way to get advice and money, and to get the country mobilized in pursuit of some royal policy or another. No one knew that yet. What mattered was perception—Parliament's perception that it had preexisting and (as this was implied) inalienable rights—rights that the king did not grant them—to regulate their membership. That language of rights will of course be crucial to the history of democracy on both sides of the Atlantic. We will first begin to see it asserted consistently in the 17<sup>th</sup> century in these conflicts between Parliament and the king.

Second, almost as revolutionary was Parliament's assertion that it speaks for the whole state of the realm. Think about it: Up to this point, who could say that he spoke for the whole state of the realm? Only one person: that was the king. Now, Parliament is making that claim.

We made the point in an earlier lecture (I think it was Lecture Eight) that even the House of Commons wasn't very representative of the people. James could make the point that he was every bit as representative of the people as these rich landowners, but clearly some MPs were beginning to think

that they had a responsibility to the people. As Coke himself said in 1621, “We serve here for thousands and ten thousands.” That idea is dynamite. That idea that Parliament is not the king’s, but that it is the people’s and has a responsibility to the people is also going to help to create this tension around the issue of sovereignty. The third point I want to make is would any Parliament have spoken to Elizabeth or Henry VIII like this? If not, what was it about James that gave them courage? That one I’m just going to have to leave to your interpretation.

Still, I want to be careful. I don’t want to stress the degree of conflict here too much. Both sides backed down somewhat to reach a compromise over Goodwin. The king conceded that Parliament had the right to regulate its own membership. In return, Parliament did not send him the *Apology* officially. He never had to respond to it, so he never had to assert, “I’m the king and you get your privileges from me” and get into a longer argument.

It should be clear that the issue of sovereignty—the king’s relationship to Parliament—had been broached. The language of rights had been asserted, and it’s only the first year of the reign. Thus, in the very first year of the Stuarts, the first of the fundamental issues that would beset the Stuart century had been raised. Because of a combination of James’s personality, his absolutist reputation, those MPs gunning for him, his inexperience, and Parliament’s bad history and yet respectful assertiveness, we’ve seen the first evidence of disagreement on the fundamental nature of the English constitution.

In the next lecture, we’ll see the opportunities for disagreement between king and Parliament will multiply. They’ll come thick and fast thanks to the twin issues of government finance and foreign policy.

# The Ascendancy of Buckingham: 1614–28

## Lecture 29

**The titles were pleasant and the offices were lucrative, but the most important thing about them was that they gave Buckingham control of a vast field of government patronage. By the 1620s, Buckingham was as important a patron, and had as much of a stranglehold on patronage within the English government, as Wolsey had done.**

**L**ike Elizabeth, James I enjoyed the company of friends and favorites, though early in the reign, James did not allow his favorites to have much influence on policy. In 1603, James I was accompanied south by “the hungry Scots,” a group of courtiers from the northern kingdom who profited from his generosity. The greatest of these, Robert Carr, Earl of Somerset, fell as a result of the Overbury scandal, in which he and the countess, his wife, were accused of poisoning an opponent to their marriage.

George Villiers replaced Somerset in the king’s favor by 1614. Villiers possessed all the attributes of the successful courtier. He was handsome, courtly, and an excellent dancer and horseman. James fell in love with these qualities, as fully as and far more publicly than Elizabeth had fallen for Leicester. Given contemporary attitudes to kingship and sexuality, this did nothing for his image with the English people. James showered Villiers with titles and offices, creating him Gentleman of the Bedchamber in 1615, Master of the Horse and Knight of the Garter in 1616, Earl of Buckingham in 1617, Marquess in 1618, Duke in 1623, and Admiral of England in 1619. These offices made Buckingham rich and gave him control of vast fields of patronage. By 1621, he ran the government as fully as Wolsey had done. All of this meant that he would not support efforts to cut royal expenditure. But Buckingham’s greatest negative influence was in the area of foreign policy.

During the early years of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, English men and women were beginning to debate their role in Europe and the wider world. James I fancied himself a *Rex Pacificus*, bringing peace not only to the English and the Scots, but to all the peoples of Europe. Soon after his accession, he negotiated the Treaty of London, ending the war with Spain. Subsequently, he sought to

ease tensions between the Catholic and Protestant powers by engineering diplomatic marriages: His son, Prince Henry, would marry the *infanta* of Spain; his daughter, Elizabeth, would marry the Protestant Elector Palatine. Unfortunately, Henry died in 1612. The Palatine marriage took place, but in 1618, the Elector was driven from his lands by the imperial army in the Thirty Years' War.

The Thirty Years' War pitted the Habsburgs (Spain, the Holy Roman Empire) and their Catholic allies against the Bourbons (France) and their Protestant allies Denmark, Sweden, and some northern German states. It devastated central Europe, wrecked the economy of Spain and killed millions. James was wise to stay out of it, but committed Protestants in Parliament wanted England to get involved. They saw England as a chosen nation whose duty was to advance Protestantism. They found the court's pacifism, profligacy, and pursuit of pleasure disgraceful. But they had no realistic notion of how much Continental war would cost.

It was at this point that Buckingham intervened. James and Buckingham convened the 1621 Parliament hoping for money to raise an army to restore the Elector Palatine. But when Parliament called for a wider war, James said that they had no business debating matters of foreign policy. This led to a famous controversy about free speech. James and Buckingham's real purpose was to use the army as a threat to persuade Spain into a marriage with James's surviving son, Prince Charles. In 1622–1623 Buckingham and Charles made their way to Spain incognito. The result was a diplomatic embarrassment when it became clear that the Spanish wanted no part of such a marriage.

The Spanish fiasco had two important results. The first was that it gave Buckingham an opportunity to cultivate Prince Charles. This was important because, in 1625, James I died and was succeeded by his son. In many ways, Charles I (1625–1649) looked and acted much more like a divine-right monarch than his father had done. Though short in stature, he bore himself with regal dignity, as seen in several paintings by Van Dyck. He maintained a strict court etiquette, which contrasted with his father's informality. He was conventional in morality and kept a respectable court. He was highly cultured, arguably the greatest connoisseur who ever sat on the English

throne. Van Dyck's series of paintings of him and the royal family is one of the great achievements of Western art and kingly propaganda.

But, as with Henry VIII or Mary I, these seemingly positive attributes had their dark side. Charles's dignity often came across as aloofness. A shy and reticent man, he never had the common touch. His punctiliousness was the bugbear of a small mind. He was obsessed with etiquette, order, and obedience from all his subjects. His respectable court was narrow and unrepresentative of the variety of opinions in the country. He never took advice or understood the concept of a loyal opposition. Even his magnificent art collection had a down side. Only courtiers were allowed to enjoy it or be exposed to its propaganda message.

But every English taxpayer had to pay for it, much to their resentment.

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**[Charles I] never took advice or understood the concept of a loyal opposition.**

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The second important result of the Spanish fiasco was that Buckingham and Charles now switched over to the war party. In 1624, over the reservations of the dying James I and Lord Treasurer Middlesex, Parliament voted money for war against Spain. However, it did not vote as much as the government asked for and it established a commission to monitor how the funds would be spent. This was an unprecedented statement of distrust in the Crown's financial management. Buckingham's administration proved corrupt and inefficient in several pointless Continental expeditions. Worse, late in 1626, Buckingham bungled into a second, simultaneous war with France, which proved equally unsuccessful. Increasingly, the people complained of high taxes, soldiers billeted on the populace, and military failure.

Beginning in 1626, the House of Commons called for Buckingham's impeachment. To shield the favorite, Charles prorogued Parliament before it could vote taxes. Without authorization for new taxes, the king resorted to a forced loan, which many gentry refused to pay. The Parliament of 1628 met in an angry mood. Still, Parliament offered the king five new taxes if he would agree to a document called the "Petition of Right." It had four major provisions:

- No man could be forced to pay a tax not voted by Parliament.
- No free man could be imprisoned without charge (the right of *habeus corpus*).
- No soldiers or sailors could be billeted on the population without their consent.
- No civilian could be subject to martial law.

Charles tried to wriggle out of the agreement, but in the end, he needed the money too desperately. Once he agreed, the Commons again demanded Buckingham's impeachment, leading to another dismissal.

That summer, while going down to the fleet, Buckingham was assassinated by an embittered army officer named John Felton. This had three effects.

- It served to further distance Charles I from his subjects, many of whom lit bonfires in celebration.
- It removed the principal advocate of war against Spain and France, thus making peace possible.
- It left the king without a principal advisor. Many assumed that he now turned to his wife, Queen Henrietta Maria. This was worrisome to many English men and women because Henrietta Maria was a Catholic.

Thus, the problem of foreign policy would now become entwined, as it had so often in the past, with that of religion. ■

### Suggested Reading

Bucholz and Key, *Early Modern England*, chap. 7, sec. 3.

Coward, *Stuart Age*, chap. 5.

Kishlansky, *Monarchy Transformed*, chap. 4.

Lockyer, *Early Stuarts*, chaps. 6–7, 13.

### Questions to Consider

1. Why did James I choose to govern through Buckingham? What role does the favorite play for a king? Why is it a role that is often resented by others?
2. To judge from what we have learned so far, why did nations go to war in early-modern Europe? Do we do so today with greater care and justification?

# The Ascendancy of Buckingham: 1614–28

## Lecture 29—Transcript

In the last lecture, we met King James I and saw how he dealt with the ambiguities left behind by the Tudors over sovereignty within the English constitution. In this lecture, we'll examine his handling of two additional areas of tension that threatened the Stuart state: those of government finance and foreign policy.

Here, once again, the king's personality is going to play a crucial role, not least because of his tendency to give power and money to court favorites, in particular George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham. As we'll see, Buckingham would rise to power and wealth unheard of in a favorite since Wolsey. Unlike that unfortunate cardinal, the Duke would maintain his power into the next reign, that of James's son Charles I, with dire consequences for the fiscal and foreign policy of England.

The problem of royal finance represented a second long-term area of tension between the king on the one hand and his Parliament and people on the other. If you've been following this course, you know that this is a problem of longstanding. English kings have almost always been poor and certainly continuously since the reign of Henry VIII.

In other words, it's not exactly James's fault, for example, that he came to the throne in the midst of the inflation described in Lecture Twenty, or that his reign is bracketed by two periods of famine, the 1590s and the 1620s. It wasn't James's fault that he inherited a central administration and revenue system that was ramshackle, inefficient, and corrupt.

Because he couldn't pay his servants adequately at the center, they looked out for themselves. They took bribes and fees, and they even bought and sold offices. Because he couldn't pay his servants in the countryside at all, sheriffs, JPs and tax collectors often felt that it was more important to get along with their neighbors than to do the king's business. For example, in collecting taxes, they'd undervalue the wealth of their fellow landowners.



It wasn't James's fault—or at least it was not a fault in James—that unlike Elizabeth, he had a wife and children. Most people thought this a good thing after the uncertainty of the succession during the whole of Elizabeth's reign, but of course, each member of the new royal family would need their own court and palatial accommodation. That was going to cost money.

It wasn't James's fault that he inherited an expectant and rapacious court that was anxious for a more generous royal patron after his miserly predecessor. It wasn't James's fault that that predecessor left him a royal debt of £365,000, or a little over a year's expenditure.

But it was James's fault that having spent most of his life ruling a relatively poor country, he viewed England as a ship that had just come in. In his own words, he said that he had been, "Like a poor man wandering about 40 years in a wilderness and barren soil, and now arrived at the land promised."

It was James's fault that he decided to make up for lost time by spending English money like water. He built magnificent buildings like the Banqueting House at Whitehall and the Queen's House at Greenwich. We learned about that in a previous lecture. He staged elaborate masques. He spent money on his court and on his favorites.

To give you just one example, the expenses of the Great Wardrobe (the household department that provided furniture) increased 400 percent from what they had been under Elizabeth. By 1610, James I had spent nearly £250,000 on "the hungry Scots," the Scots courtiers that came down with him when he ascended the throne. As a result, annual royal expenditure skyrocketed. It had been about £300,000 pounds in wartime under Elizabeth; it was £500,000 in peacetime under James.

The royal debt skyrocketed too. It went from £365,000 in 1603 to £600,000 in 1608, and then to £900,000 pounds—three times James's annual revenue—by 1618.

As you know, and as anyone who's ever been short of money knows (as my students know), there are only two possible solutions to this problem: You're either going to have to get Daddy to pay more money—in this case

Parliament—or you’re going to have to cut your expenditure. Both would be difficult.

Take raising revenue: This was difficult because Parliament knew how James spent his money and they weren’t about to facilitate his pleasures anymore than they had already done. Government attempts to get Parliament to cough up more money in 1610, 1614, and 1621 all failed. The 1614 attempt is one of my favorites. This Parliament actually accomplished nothing and became to be known as the “addled Parliament.”

The man in charge of trying to get James more money was Elizabeth’s old Secretary of State, Robert Cecil, whom James named Earl of Salisbury and Lord Treasurer. He attempted to increase yields from existing revenues in three ways. First, he tried to reform the Crown lands. The problem with this was that there were hardly any Crown lands left to reform. Second, Salisbury sold titles—titles of honor, peerages, and a new office created just for this purpose, that of baronet. This of course did bring in money, but it cheapened the nobility.

Finally, Salisbury changed the rates at which customs were collected and applied duties to products upon which there had not previously been customs. He did this without parliamentary permission. This came to be known as the “Impositions,” and it was wildly unpopular, so all three of these methods to increase revenues had their problems.

What about decreasing expenditure? This was hard because favorites and courtiers fought hard against it. They’d lived in the lean times under Elizabeth. James had been like a sugar daddy to them. They didn’t want the flow of money and gifts to stop. James I himself was of a very generous nature.

By 1621 (fast forward 10 years), Robert Cecil, Earl of Salisbury, the one man who might have restrained the king, was dead. He died in 1612, worn out with care. The king’s debts stood at £1 million. City loans were drying up, and the government was firmly in the hands of a royal favorite who wanted no part of economy: George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham.

Who was he? Where did he come from? To talk about Buckingham, I have to talk about the favorites and James's propensity to surround himself with favorites. As you'll recall, early in the reign, James I came south with "the hungry Scots," a group of courtiers from his northern kingdom who profited from his generosity and England's wealth. The most prominent of these was Robert Carr, Earl of Somerset. Between 1607 and 1613, James lavished lands and offices on Somerset. Somerset wasn't really politically ambitious. He was more socially ambitious. The capstone to that ambition was a socially prominent marriage to the well connected, but notoriously promiscuous, Francis Howard, Countess of Essex.

There were problems with the marriage. First, there was the problem that the Countess of Essex was already married to Robert Devereux, third Earl of Essex. He's the son of Elizabeth's ill-starred favorite. Moreover, the match was opposed by Somerset's best friend and advisor, Sir Thomas Overbury, who threatened to reveal damaging secrets about the couple if the marriage went forward.

With James's help, the ambitious couple solved their problems. First, the Countess secured a divorce from the Earl of Essex on the grounds that he had been unable to consummate their marriage for five years because he had been bewitched. The difficulty here was proving it. As proof, she submitted the results of a farcical physical examination, which purported to demonstrate, to the complete astonishment of the court, that she was in fact a virgin. Everyone was shocked.

As for Overbury, he had offended the king on a number of accounts and he ended up in the Tower of London, where he very conveniently died. Are you beginning to sense that maybe the Court of James I was not exactly a monastery? The marriage went ahead in the presence of the king in 1613. Within several months, it emerged that Overbury had been poisoned and that the Countess had ordered the poisoning. Even James's court couldn't look the other way on this one. The Somersets were convicted as accessories to murder in 1616. James eventually pardoned them, but their court careers were over.

The damage to the court's reputation and finances was immense. Still, by the time of his fall, Somerset had already been eclipsed by another favorite. In 1614, the king was introduced to a young courtier from a minor gentry family named George Villiers. Villiers had all the attributes of the successful courtier. He was handsome and courtly (well-behaved and knew how to behave). He was an excellent dancer and horseman. He was also given credit for being highly intelligent. Historians have charged him with vaulting ambition and an absence of scruples.

In any case, James fell in love with these qualities in his "Steenie," as he called Villiers, probably a reference to St. Steven who martyred himself for the love of Christ. The thought was that Steenie—George Villiers—would be willing to be a martyr for the love of James. He seems to have loved his Steenie as fully as Elizabeth had fallen for her "sweet Robin." Given contemporary attitudes to kingship and sexuality, this did nothing for James's image with the English people.

James showered Villiers with titles and offices. I'll read to you the prologue to Villiers's impeachment from several years later, which begins:

George, Duke, Marquess, and Earl of Buckingham; Earl of Coventry; Viscount Villiers; Baron of Waddon; Great Admiral of the kingdoms of England and Ireland and the principality of Wales; General Governor of the seas and ships of the said kingdom; Lieutenant General, Admiral, Captain General, and governor of his Majesty's Royal Fleet and Army lately set forth; Master of the Horse of our Sovereign Lord, the King; Lord Warden, Chancellor and Admiral of the sink ports and of the members thereof; Constable of Dover Castle; Justice of An Ayer of the Forests and Chases on this side of the River Trent; Constable of the Castle at Windsor; Gentleman of his Majesty's Bedchamber; one of his Majesty's most Privy Council in his realms, both in England, Scotland, and Ireland; and Knight of the most honorable Order of the Garter.

When the historian Conrad Russell reprinted that list, there was a little footnote that said, "One of the charges against Buckingham was the engrossment of offices."

The titles were pleasant and the offices were lucrative, but the most important thing about them was that they gave Buckingham control of a vast field of government patronage. By the 1620s, Buckingham was as important a patron, and had as much of a stranglehold on patronage within the English government, as Wolsey had done. This means that virtually everyone in government somehow owed their allegiance, loyalty, and job to Buckingham. You've noticed I've started calling him "Buckingham." He was created Duke in the 1620s.

This also meant, of course, that since Buckingham's power increased with the size of his patronage, he would not be very receptive to the idea of reducing the size of the government, which, you'll remember from the king's financial difficulties, is something they really have to do.

When the Crown's debts reached £1 million and City loans started to dry up in the 1620s, Lord Treasurer Middlesex attempted to cut expenditure. For a while, he succeeded, until he started cutting into Buckingham's patronage. At that point, Buckingham and his cronies in the House of Commons and House of Lords engineered an impeachment for Middlesex, reviving an old medieval custom that hadn't been used in some time. Buckingham would eventually regret that precedent.

Middlesex was impeached in 1624. He tried to fight back by finding another teenage boy whom the king might fall for and thrusting him into the bedchamber, but James remained loyal to his Steenie. Middlesex fell, and Buckingham remained ascendant.

As this implies—as the king slowed down in the 1620s—he began to forget himself in hunting and hanging around with the Duke, and the Duke began to make policy. As James told his council, "Christ had his John, and I have my George."

Buckingham's greatest, and arguably most disastrous, influence was in the area of foreign policy. During the early years of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, English men and women were engaged in a debate about foreign policy, specifically England's relationship to Europe. It's the same debate that had been going on for 500 years, and it's still going on today.

James I contributed to that debate by fancying himself a *Rex Pacificus*. That is, he intended to bring peace not only to the English and the Scots, but to all the peoples of Europe. Soon after his accession, he negotiated the Treaty of London, which ended the war with Spain that Elizabeth had been unable to end.

Subsequently, he sought to ease tensions between the Catholic and the Protestant powers by engineering diplomatic marriages. His master plan was that his eldest son, Prince Harry, would marry the *infanta* of Spain. His daughter, Elizabeth, would marry the Protestant Frederic V, Elector Palatine, who was one of the leaders of the Protestant movement in Europe. Thus, James would be the bridge between the Catholic and Protestant sides. Unfortunately, Henry died of typhoid fever in 1612, and the Palatine marriage took place, but in 1618, the Elector was driven from his lands by a Spanish army during the Thirty Years' War.

We have to spend some time with the Thirty Years' War because it's the biggest event happening in Europe at this time. It was one of the great tragedies in European history. It lasted from 1618–1648. It pitted the Habsburgs (that is Spain, the Holy Roman Empire, and their Catholic allies) against the Bourbon (France and their Protestant allies Denmark, Sweden, and some of the northern German states).

On one level, the Thirty Years' War is the last of the Wars of Religion. It's Spain's last chance to crush Protestantism. On another level, the fact that France fought on the side of the Protestants should tell you something. It was also a very modern war. It was a war about the balance of power in Europe, between a rising France and a fading Spain. In the end, what you need to know about the Thirty Years' War was it devastated central Europe, it wrecked the Spanish economy, and it killed millions. From this point, both the Holy Roman Empire and Spain would enter their long period of decline, while France would eventually emerge the most powerful nation in Europe.

Where does England fit in? Obviously, James was quite wise to stay out of this quagmire, but committed Protestants in Parliament wanted England to get involved. They saw England as a Protestant nation—a chosen nation—whose job it was to advance international Protestantism. They needed to get

involved in the Thirty Years' War. To them, James's pacifism was cowardly and disgraceful.

James and Buckingham convened a Parliament in 1621 to discuss the issue. Specifically, they wanted money to raise an army to restore the Elector Palatine—Elizabeth's husband—to his ancestral lands. This Parliament met in the midst of another economic recession. Parliament's always meeting in the midst of an economic recession. You've figured this out by now. It wanted to abolish monopolies. It wanted an end to the Impositions, and it wanted a full-scale naval war against Spain. By the way, you'll notice that those desires are completely incompatible. On the one hand, they want their taxes to go down; on the other hand, they want a war.

James responded with a page out of Elizabeth's book. He told them that they had no business debating foreign policy. That was a matter of state. This led to a famous controversy about free speech in which the Commons lodged a formal protest that revived some of the arguments of the *Apology* of 1604.

They asserted that:

The liberties, franchises, privileges, and jurisdictions of Parliament are the ancient and undoubted birth right and inheritance of the subjects of England, and that the arduous and urgent affairs concerning the king, state, and defense of the realm and of the Church of England, and the maintenance and making of laws and redress of mischiefs and grievances which daily happen within this realm, are the proper subjects and matter of counsel and debate in Parliament.

In other words, "We have to be able to discuss these things." James responded by sending Parliament home, by imprisoning some of its leaders, and by ripping this protest from the pages of the Commons' journal with his own hand. Of course, in doing so, he didn't solve the issue; he only made it worse.

In fact, James and Buckingham's real purpose was not so much to fight a war against Spain. They wanted this army as a bargaining chip. Their

plan was to persuade Spain that Spain didn't want to fight a war against England. Instead, what Spain really wanted to do was marry the Spanish *infanta* (the crown princess of Spain) with the remaining son of King James, Prince Charles.

In the winter of 1622–1623, Buckingham reopened negotiations for a Spanish match over the objections of a hostile people. Nobody in England wanted a Spanish marriage. They remembered the marriage of Philip II and Mary. They also remembered the Protestant martyrs, the Armada, the Gunpowder Plot (which we'll talk about in the next lecture), and Spanish atrocities in the Thirty Years' War. This was terribly unpopular.

It wasn't popular in Spain either. Spain thought they could do better than England. England still wasn't terribly important. When Buckingham and Charles asked for diplomatic credentials and passage to Spain, they were refused.

Our heroes were not deterred. Instead, they decided to go to Spain incognito. The result was a diplomatic fiasco. Armed with false beards and calling themselves Thomas and John Smith, the prince and the duke turned up in Spain. The Spanish knew who they were; nobody was fooled. They were forced to take the distinguished, but anonymous, visitors to a bullfight and on a tour of the royal art collection, but they wouldn't let them anywhere near the *infanta*. This led to a famous incident in which Prince Charles actually climbed a garden wall to get a look at his *inamorata*.

In the end, our intrepid heroes were forced to return to England without their prize to the cheers of a populace that thought it had been delivered once again from the Catholic menace. For the first and only time in their lives, Charles and Buckingham were popular. There were bonfires in London and bells rang in all the churches.

In fact, the Spanish fiasco had two very important results. The first was that it gave Buckingham an opportunity to cultivate Prince Charles. It was very clear that James I was slowing down. He would die in March 1625, and Buckingham would remain the principal favorite of the new monarch, Charles I.



What was the new king like? In many ways, Charles I looked and acted much more like a divine-right king than his father had done. He was relatively short, but he bore himself with regal dignity as seen in several paintings by Van Dyck. He also maintained a strict court etiquette, which contrasted with his father's loose informality.

In another contrast, his personal morality was strict and conventional. He kept a respectable court. He was highly cultured, arguably the greatest connoisseur who ever sat on the English throne. As we mentioned in Lecture Twenty-Seven, he sent his diplomats through Europe to bring back great artwork from its great capitals. It was at Charles's insistence that Rubens and Van Dyck came to England. From the former, he commissioned the Banqueting House ceiling depicting his father's ascent to heaven and glory. From the latter, he commissioned a series of paintings of the royal family that is one of the great monuments of Western art and kingly propaganda.

As with Henry VIII and Mary I, each of these positive qualities had its dark side. Charles's dignity often came across as aloofness. He was a shy and reticent man, and he never had the common touch. His punctiliousness was in fact the bugbear of a small mind. He was obsessed with etiquette, order, and obedience from all his subjects. He wanted everybody to think the same way. He hated diversity of opinions. He saw all disagreement as disloyalty. As a result, his respectable court was also narrow and unrepresentative of the variety of opinions in the country. The court should be a place of contact between the king and everybody, and Charles I's court wasn't.

He never took advice or understood the concept of a loyal opposition. Instead, Charles I was full of his divine right to rule, expecting instantaneous obedience from his subjects without any need to explain himself, either to his people or his Parliament. He felt no need, for example, to engage in the sort of propaganda campaign that Elizabeth had done. Even his magnificent art collection therefore had a down side. Only courtiers ever got the message. They're the only ones who saw these magnificent pictures of the king showing him to be God's chosen, but the whole country had to pay for it, and they resented that.

The second important result of the Spanish fiasco was that it brought Buckingham and Charles over to the war party. Insulted, Buckingham goes to Parliament in 1624 and demands war with Spain. Parliament votes the money. They want war with Spain, but they don't vote as much money as Buckingham asks for. James I would later say, "They voted enough to make a good beginning of the war, but what the end will be, God knows." By the way, I must apologize for playing fast and loose with dates. You'll notice that James has now revived briefly at the beginning of this war. Don't worry: He'll still die in March 1625. The war actually began before his death.

Parliament also established a commission to see how the king (whichever king it would be) spent the money they voted. That's a sign of tremendous distrust of the monarch's financial responsibilities.

In fact, both James and Parliament were quite right to be wary, for Buckingham proved to be an incompetent war minister and his administration proved corrupt and inefficient in several pointless continental expeditions. Soldiers and sailors complained of rotten food and decrepit ships. At one point, the Royal Navy was actually forced to use used sails that had first seen service during the Armada.

At home, the people complained of high taxes, the imposition of martial law, and the billeting of troops on their homes. *The Recorder of Taunton* protested, "Every man knows there is no law for this. We know our houses are our castles."

In Buckingham's defense, it must be said that he was never given enough money to fight a proper war. The king needed about £1 million a year if he was going to fight Spain successfully, but in 1625, Parliament only voted one-fifth of that amount. Worse, late in 1626, Buckingham bungled into a second simultaneous war with France over shipping rights and the treatment of the Huguenots.

If you've been following this course, you know that the Tudors were not always wise in their choice of enemies and certainly fought a number of unnecessary wars, but no Tudor had ever been stupid enough to take on the two most powerful nations in Europe at the same time. Needless to say, this

war too went badly, culminating in a botched amphibious assault on the Isle of Re off Larochele between June and October 1627. If you've ever read *The Three Musketeers*, you know about this incident.

Even before this, in 1626, the House of Commons began to call for Buckingham's impeachment. To shield his favorite, Charles took two drastic actions. First, he took responsibility for the failures of the war himself. He said, "It's my fault, it's not Buckingham's fault. Leave him alone." This will probably strike you as being a very generous thing for the king to do, but it was also a profoundly stupid thing for the king to do. It broke an ancient tradition that said that anything that went wrong was always the minister's fault. It was never the king's fault. The king can do no wrong. Henry VIII reveled in that principle.

What Charles has done is he's now saying to his people, "If you have a problem with the country, blame me. It's my fault." It's a big mistake.

Charles's second move was to prorogue Parliament before they could impeach Buckingham or vote any new taxes. In other words, he's allowing his financial situation to deteriorate, and he might lose the war in order to protect his friend and favorite.

Without authorization for new taxes, the king resorts to an old Tudor expedient: He declares a forced loan. He says to his wealthiest subjects, "You're loaning me money." In the end, this yielded £260,000. That helped, but it wasn't enough. The king was going to have to call Parliament again.

Worse, 76 gentlemen refused to pay the loan, charging correctly that it was an unparliamentary tax. Would they have done that with Henry VIII? Charles put them into prison without charge, since, in fact, they had violated no law. This prompted five of them, all knights, to sue for a writ of *habeas corpus*: "You've got to charge us if you're going to put us in prison." In the end, the king's judges refused to rule on the five knights' case. That was considered a moral victory for the knights. In effect, the judges don't want to address the issue in law because they know the king has broken the law.

Now we go back to the problem of sovereignty: See how finance and sovereignty are connected?

The Parliament of 1628 met in an angry mood. Some of the imprisoned gentlemen actually won seats. They all feared that if they voted money for an army, Charles I would use it not against Spain or France, but against recalcitrant English men to suppress their liberty. Their position was they would not approve any taxation until the king had heard their grievances. They offered the king five new taxes if he would only agree to a document called the “Petition of Right.”

The Petition of Right of 1628 is a very important document. It states first that no man can be forced to pay a tax not voted by Parliament. Second, no free man can be imprisoned without charge—the right of *habeas corpus*. Third, no soldiers or sailors can be billeted on the population without their consent. Fourth, no civilian can be subject to martial law. If you’re familiar with the points at issue during the American Revolution, this will all sound very familiar.

Charles tried to weasel out of it, but in the end, he couldn’t. He needed the money too desperately, so he agreed. At that point, the Commons turned around and said, “Right, and we want to impeach Buckingham,” so the king sent Parliament home again. Again, the king had lost a chance for more money in order to save Buckingham.

There were limits, however, to the extent that Charles I could protect his favorite. That summer, while going down to the fleet, the duke was assassinated by an embittered army officer named John Felton. This had three profound effects. First, it further served to distance Charles I from his subjects. He considered the assassination of Buckingham a barbaric act. What did his subjects do? They celebrated it with bonfires and bells.

Second, the death of Buckingham did remove the principal architect of the war against France and Spain, thus making peace possible. Third, it left the king without a principal advisor. Many assumed that he would now turn to his wife, Queen Henrietta Maria. That was a problem to many English men and women because Henrietta Maria was a Roman Catholic.

In this lecture, we saw how James I's devotion and generosity to favorites, most importantly George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, aggravated preexisting tensions over the Crown's finances and its foreign policy. In some ways, James's problem was timing. He tried to be a bountiful king out of an antiquated and inadequate financial system in the midst of a poor economy. He wanted to be a pacific king at the height of the Wars of Religion. As a result, James's finances collapsed just as the international situation threatens to suck England into a very big war that undoubtedly England doesn't have the financial resources to win.

The result will be an intensification of ancient debates in Parliament and elsewhere about taxation and England's role in Europe. The problems of Crown finance and England's foreign policy became intimately bound up with those of sovereignty and the king's personality.

In the next lecture, we'll add yet another area of tension to the mix: that of religion.

# Religion and Local Control: 1628–37

## Lecture 30

**The religious situation of the three kingdoms in 1603 was nothing if not complicated. ... Puritans within the Church demanded more reform and an aggressive Protestant foreign policy. Though they'd been persecuted by Archbishops Whitgift and Bancroft, most Puritans remained within the Church. Indeed, most historians now think that circa 1610, the majority of Church of England clergymen, including many bishops, embraced Puritan theology, if perhaps not quite practice. ... The most zealous Puritans wanted more.**

**T**he religious situation of the three kingdoms in 1603 was nothing if not complicated. In England, the majority of the people were conforming members of the Church of England. Puritans within the Church demanded more reform and an aggressive Protestant foreign policy. Catholics outside of the Church of England struggled for survival and toleration. Their numbers had fallen to 40,000 through persecution and attrition. Nevertheless, with memories of the reign of Bloody Mary and the Armada very much alive, most English people still feared and hated international “popery.”

In Scotland, the majority was Presbyterian, with a minority of Catholics in the Highlands. The Stuarts had no love for the Presbyterian Kirk, which tended to resist their claims of divine-right monarchy. James I attempted to impose control by Anglican-style bishops. In Ireland, the majority was Catholics, but increasingly, the ruling class was “New English”—Protestants who were either Presbyterians or members of an Anglican-style Church of Ireland.

In England, James I sought religious peace more than religious unity. James had been reared a Presbyterian in Scotland but found the Church of England, with its emphasis on hierarchy and authority, much more congenial to his divine-right views of kingship. He tended to see Puritans as English Presbyterians: self-righteous, dubiously loyal, and naturally independent, if not outright rebellious. However, he was careful to try to win over

moderates. He gave them some reforms (including the “authorized version” of the Bible). He appointed moderate Puritans as bishops.

Similarly, James sought to win over moderate Catholics and avoid persecution if they would pledge loyalty to the Crown. Most did so, grateful for the easing of Elizabethan penal legislation. But some Catholics wanted full-blown toleration. When they failed to get it, a group of Catholic gentry hatched a scheme to blow up the king and both Houses of Parliament at the state opening on 5 November 1605. The Gunpowder Plot was discovered, the plotters were hanged, and laws against Catholics were tightened. Even so, even here, James let sleeping dogs lie, easing the persecution of Catholics over time.

This easygoing religious policy changed under Charles I. He favored a group of High Church clergy called the Arminians, after the theologian Jacob Arminius. Arminius and his followers argued for free will and the possibility of earning salvation, the efficacy of good works, the importance of religious ritual, and the sanctity of the priesthood and the authority of the religious hierarchy. Charles appointed a noted Arminian, William Laud, Archbishop of Canterbury in 1633. They stepped up episcopal inspections (visitations) of local churches. They enforced more elaborate ritual in those churches. They persecuted Puritans who opposed these changes in the Court of High Commission.

To Puritans, the return to ritual and hierarchy looked like a return to Rome, while the revival of persecution reminded them of Bloody Mary. It did not help that Charles I was married to a Roman Catholic French princess, Henrietta Maria, who was entitled to be served by Catholic clergy and lay servants. Many worried that she advised the king, that she would convert him to Rome, and that she would raise their numerous children Catholic. They further noted that Charles I tended not to enforce the laws against Catholics while he was persecuting Puritans. In fact, if Charles was soft on Catholics it was not because he was one; he simply saw them, correctly, as a far smaller and less dangerous minority than Puritans.

These concerns came to a head in the Parliament of 1629. Once again, Parliament met in the middle of a financial depression, this time in the textile trade. Once again, the king needed money to fight the war. Once again, Parliament refused to vote money until its grievances over illegal taxation (the Impositions) and religion were addressed. Once again, Charles I sent Parliament home before addressing the issues. But before Parliament adjourned, several members literally held the speaker in his chair so that they could pass resolutions that anyone paying the Impositions, anyone counseling their collection, and anyone intending innovation in religion was “a capital enemy to the kingdom and commonwealth.” Obviously, this meant Charles.

It should not be surprising that after this experience, Charles I attempted to rule without Parliament—what historians later called “the personal rule.” In his view, Parliament had violated, fundamentally, the English Constitution by seeking to interfere in the prerogative of the Crown. On the surface, the chief difficulty in ruling without Parliament would be money. Charles I had only two choices: cut expenditure or raise revenue. He did both. He cut expenditure: He sued for peace with both Spain and France, thus allowing him to disband most of his forces. He curtailed the performance of masques and the purchase of artwork. He launched a reform of the administration under Lord Treasurer Weston, which came to be called “thorough.” Useless offices were abolished; sliding fees were commuted to established salaries; and commissions were established for Ireland, the militia, and trade. He raised revenue: He raised customs rates—again more impositions; he sold more monopolies and farmed out more government services; he collected more fines for recusancy; he searched old medieval statute books for any right, fee, or tax he could legally collect. This led to the revival of old forest laws and fines; distraint of (that is, charging for) knighthood; and the extension of ship money, a tax to supply the Royal Navy, from port communities to the whole country.

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**Anyone intending innovation in religion was “a capital enemy to the kingdom and commonwealth.” Obviously, this meant Charles.**

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On a purely fiscal level, these policies worked: By 1638, revenue rose to almost £1 million a year, and the royal debt fell to manageable levels. But many of these initiatives were wildly unpopular. Former members of Parliament argued that the king was violating, fundamentally, the English Constitution by collecting unparliamentary taxes and infringing on the property rights of his subjects. Low-level resistance began in 1635. In 1636, John Hampden refused to pay ship money on the grounds that it was legal only in a state of emergency. He lost his case, but just barely: The panel of royal judges voted only seven to five for the king. In the wake of this moral victory, others began to refuse to pay ship money. By 1638, the gentry who assessed and collected the king's taxes were beginning to refuse to do that as well. They resented the king's refusal to call a Parliament (the problem of sovereignty); the unparliamentary taxes (the problem of finance); the king's incompetent diplomacy (the problem of foreign policy); and the constant interference of Arminian clergy in local religious life (the problem of religion). Now their obedience to the king's government in London (the problem of local control) began to break down.

By the late 1630s, Charles I was walking a dangerous tightrope. While he had raised his revenue and cut his expenses, the growing tax strike meant that any crisis could send him into debt, bankruptcy, and the need to recall an angry Parliament. That crisis came in 1637 in Charles's northern kingdom because of the old problem of religion. ■

### Suggested Reading

Bucholz and Key, *Early Modern England*, chap. 7, secs. 4–5.

Coward, *Stuart Age*, chap. 5.

Kishlansky, *Monarchy Transformed*, chap. 5.

Lockyer, *Early Stuarts*, chaps. 8–12, 14.

## Questions to Consider

1. Why were the early Stuarts so antagonistic to Presbyterianism and Puritanism? What about Anglican Arminianism would have appealed to them?
2. Consider Charles I's arguments for refusing to call Parliament after 1629 and those of the local aristocracy who refused to collect his taxes. Who was in greater violation of the English Constitution in the period 1625–1640: the king, Parliament, or the local elites?

## Religion and Local Control: 1628–37

### Lecture 30—Transcript

In the last two lectures, we began to see how the issues of sovereignty, finance, foreign policy, and royal personality intertwined to put the Stuart state in England under increasing tension. In this lecture, we add to that mix the vexed issue of religion, not just in the context of England but, in this and the following lecture, that of Scotland and Ireland as well.

As we'll see, each of the three kingdoms ruled by the Stuarts had a different and problematic religious settlement. England was primarily Anglican, with Puritans on one side demanding more reform and Catholics on the other rejecting the Church of England and maybe England itself.

Scotland was Presbyterian, much closer to the Puritan ideal, with a Catholic minority in the Highlands. The Catholic majority of Ireland was increasingly resentful of their displacement and domination by Anglicans and Presbyterians. These differences were very largely papered over by James I with a policy of allowing sleeping dogs their rest, but they would erupt into crisis under the much more punctilious and provocative Charles I.

That would lead in 1629 to a royal attempt to rule without Parliament. Would the Stuarts succeed in establishing their absolute rule in Church and State without references to the wishes of their subjects? Would the ruling elite put up with this? Only the next half hour will tell.

The religious situation of the three kingdoms in 1603 was nothing if not complicated. As we've seen, in England the majority were conforming members of the Church of England. That Church was officially Protestant, but not everyone agreed on what precisely that meant. Puritans within the Church demanded more reform and an aggressive Protestant foreign policy. Though they'd been persecuted by Archbishops Whitgift and Bancroft, most Puritans remained within the Church. Indeed, most historians now think that circa 1610, the majority of Church of England clergymen, including many bishops, embraced Puritan theology, if perhaps not quite practice. That is, early in the reign of James I, most Church of England clergy would agree

with the Puritan emphasis on predestination, the necessity of Scriptural justification for both doctrine and practice, and a stern godly morality.

The most zealous Puritans wanted more. They wanted to improve the lot of the poor parish clergy. They wanted to reduce the power of the bishops—even Puritan bishops. They wanted to purge ceremonies like churching of women and the sign of the cross. They wanted a ban on Sunday sports, entertainments and dancing, and drinking on the Sabbath.

Within the Church, there was a growing reaction to these views. Conservative high churchmen embraced hierarchy, ceremony, and harmless Sunday pleasures such as articulated by King James in the Book of Sports. This group would form the nucleus of a set of attitudes that would eventually be called “High Church” or “Anglican.” For obvious reasons, they tended to get a lot of support from the monarch, whether the monarch was Elizabeth, James, or Charles. Puritans feared this Anglican movement, because to them, it appeared to be a return to Catholicism—all that hierarchy and ceremony.

Certainly, another Puritan complaint was that there were still Catholics in England. What about them? Catholics outside of the Church of England (some did try to maintain a foot in both worlds) struggled for survival and toleration. By 1603, their numbers had dwindled down to about 40,000 people through persecution and attrition. During the war with Spain, despite the pope’s excommunication of Elizabeth, the vast majority had remained loyal to the queen. Still, the English people remembered the reign of Bloody Mary and the Armada, and most feared and hated international “popery.”

In fact, some historians have argued that it was this hatred of international popery—the idea of being God’s chosen people fighting the anti-Christ of Rome—far more than any positive feeling of Englishness, which gave birth to English nationalism. In other words, the English may not have known who they were, but they knew they weren’t Catholics.

In any case, the penal laws against Catholics remained on the statute books, but as the Catholic menace receded in the 1590s, they were enforced less and less, to the chagrin of Puritans. Puritans would have preferred the situation in Scotland. In Scotland too, religion was intimately tied up with nationalism.

The majority was Presbyterian, with a minority of Catholics in the poor, isolated Highlands. The most powerful religious body in Scotland was the Presbyterian Kirk run by a general assembly—a sort of council of elders. Its power was actually diffused through a series of regional synods down to the individual congregations. The Kirk, it could be argued, is much more Puritan and much more democratic than the hierarchical Church of England.

The Kirk maintained the sort of unadorned liturgy, emphasis on preaching, and plain church decoration that Puritans loved and yearned for—and the Stuarts hated. Given their love for hierarchy and ritual, it was inevitable that the Stuarts would have no love for the Presbyterian Kirk, which tended to resist their claims of divine right. If religious power comes from the congregations, so, Presbyterians would argue, political power comes from the people.

James I didn't like these ideas. He attempted to impose an Anglican style of control on the Presbyterians. That is, he got Scotland to agree to the existence of bishops within the Kirk, but that movement hadn't gotten very far by the time of his move south in 1603.

What about Ireland? In Ireland, the majority of both the original Gaelic natives and the old English, who had come over during the Middle Ages, were Catholics. The Crown had established a Protestant Church of Ireland, but had made very little effort to proselytize among the native population. They just imposed this, but never watered it.

Instead, following the wars and rebellions of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and following especially the O'Neill Rebellion that ended in 1603 in the Flight of the Earls in 1608, the Crown encouraged Protestant immigration by granting newcomers the lands of disposed Catholics. They took land from Catholics, and they gave it to Protestants.

These Protestants became known as the "New English," though most of them were Presbyterian Scots. (We're going to be using that terminology throughout: Old English are old Anglo-Irish Catholics, the Gaelic Irish were native Catholics, and the New English were Protestants.) By the end of James's reign, this group controls most of Ulster, the former Catholic

stronghold, much of the rest of the island, and the government and Parliament in Dublin. The combination of disposed Catholic majority and a privileged Protestant minority was a powder keg, as we will see.

It should be obvious that each of the Stuarts' kingdoms was wracked by religious tension, fear, and resentments, which would spill over into politics, social relations, economics, and cultural divisions. How did James and Charles deal with this situation? The basic argument of this lecture is going to be "differently." Below, we're going to concentrate for the rest of this lecture on England. We'll return to Scotland and Ireland in the next lecture.

In England, James I sought religious peace above religious unity. He didn't need everyone to agree. He just needed everybody to behave. James had been reared in Scotland as a Presbyterian under the tutelage of the formidable George Buchanan. Buchanan from a very young age had tried to instill in young James that political power came from the people, just like religious power in those Presbyterian congregations, and that they could therefore revoke it from a bad ruler.

If you've been paying attention, you know that James rejected this training, arguing that political power came from God and that only he could call it back. When James came south in 1603 and found the Church of England with its emphasis on hierarchy and authority, it was like he had gone to heaven. Remember, his financial situation improved and now he had a State Church that bolstered the power of kingship.

He tended to see English Puritans as if they were English Presbyterians. He called them "brain sick and heady preachers." He thought them self-righteous, dubiously loyal, and naturally anti-authoritarian, if not outright rebellious. Still, he was intrigued when on his way south a group of Puritan divines presented him with a petition: the "Millinery Petition," so-called because over 1,000 clergymen signed it, demanding reform of the Church.

James, remember, was a scholar. He loved intellectual debate, so he decided, "Right, we'll have a big conference." He held the Hampton Court Conference in 1604. At the conference, James promised moderate reform and a new authorized translation of the Bible, but he made it clear that he

was at heart an Anglican. He uttered the famous line, when the Puritans started complaining about bishops, “No bishop, no king.” Get rid of bishops, and you’re getting rid of hierarchy. “You might as well get rid of me.” It’s a typical James I conference in that he would invite all these people to talk, and then he would tell them what the truth was.

In fact, as his reign wore on, James continued to reject radical reform, but he did try to win over moderates. He did give them their “authorized King James version” of the Bible in 1611, and he gave them some reforms. He appointed moderate Puritans as bishops. You see what James is doing: It’s a divide and conquer strategy. Be nice to the moderates; isolate the radicals. It worked.

Most Puritans stayed in the Church. A few radical separatists went to the Netherlands or America, but it could be said that an uneasy peace reigned in Protestant England at James’s death in 1625.

He pursued a similar strategy with Catholics. He tried to win over moderates and avoid persecution if possible, if they would remain loyal to the Crown. Like Puritans, many Catholics were hoping for big change when James came to the throne. He gave promises indicating that he would, for example, “not persecute any that will be quiet and give but an outward obedience to the law.” Like Elizabeth, he did not want to open “windows into men’s souls.” In fact, most Catholics were quiet, outwardly obedient, and grateful that James was not enforcing the penal legislation.

Again, as with Puritans, some Catholics wanted more. They wanted a full-blown toleration. These more radical Catholics were very disappointed after the Treaty of London in 1605. They really thought that Spain would go to bat for them and demand emancipation of Catholics. Spain didn’t do that.

In the wake of this disappointment, a group of Catholic aristocrats decided on more decisive action. They hatched a plot to blow up the king and both Houses of Parliament at the state opening on 5 November 1605. It’s kind of hard to understand how this would actually help. Here you have a sympathetic king. The logic of terrorism is nothing if not illogical.

Remarkably, in those days, you could rent the basement of the House of Lords. There's empty space, the king needs the money, and so this group of Catholic aristocrats rents the basement, and they begin to fill it with barrels of gunpowder. The court was only tipped off when one of the conspirators attempted to warn a relative, William Parker, Lord Monteaule, who would be in the House that day. Monteaule contacted the Privy Council, who ordered a search of the palace. On the night before the opening, sometime around midnight, they caught Guy Fawkes red-handed with the barrels of gunpowder.

What the gunpowder plotters actually did accomplish was not the liberation of Catholics, but rather more proof in English eyes that Catholics couldn't be trusted and also that God was an Englishman and had saved England once again from the Catholic menace.

In the wake of these events, for years afterwards, English men, women, and children would be counseled to remember 5 November. They'd remember it with commemorative sermons on 5 November, bonfires, church bells, and, at every ceremonial opening of the Houses of Parliament, a ceremonial search of the basement of the House of Lords to make sure that no latter-day Guy Fawkes was planning any mischief.

By the way, the tradition that you may have encountered if you've been to England of schoolchildren asking for a "penny for the Guy," with which they will make an effigy of Guy Fawkes and burn him, is more recent. That did not happen during the period of our course. By the way, if you ever are asked for a penny and you only give an English school child a penny, he'll probably throw it back at you. The inflation has affected even this tradition.

More immediately, the conspirators were all hanged as traitors. Parliament then passed additional laws making it illegal for Catholics to practice law, hold office, or to live in or near London. They were also required to swear an oath of loyalty to the king and to abjure the pope's claim to depose civil rulers. Yet even here—even after they threatened his life—James let sleeping dogs lie. He enforced these penal laws intermittently, usually on the run up to a Parliament. He knew there were Puritans in Parliament, and they'd want to see some action on the penal laws. Otherwise, he left Catholics alone.



As a result, most moderate Catholics swore the oath, leaving extremists high and dry and unable to plan more plots. In short, despite the public relations disaster of the Gunpowder Plot and the near universal hatred of international Catholicism, actual individual Catholics were pretty much left alone under the early Stuarts. That helps to explain why the number of priests rose between 1603 and 1640 from about 300 to 750. It also explains why the number of Catholic lay people rose from 40,000 to 60,000.

You'll note that this is a victory for tolerance, but of course it did nothing for James I's reputation as a leader of a Protestant people.

What about Charles I? How did he treat this religious situation? I guess the easiest way to put it is that unlike his father, Charles I was unwilling to let sleeping dogs lie. As I hope I've made clear, Charles I was not an easy man. He was not given to toleration. Rather, he liked uniformity. He liked conformity. He wanted everyone to be a High Church Anglican.

More specifically, Charles favored a group of High Church clergymen called the "Arminians" after the theologian Jacob Arminius. Arminius was a continental theologian from the Netherlands. He and his followers argued for free will and the possibility of modifying God's judgment, possibly even earning salvation through good works. They argued for the importance of religious ritual, because, of course, performing ceremonies was a good work. Arguing for ritual, they also argued for the sanctity of the priesthood and the authority of religious hierarchy.

Can you see why this theology would appeal to Charles I? It fits perfectly with the divine-right theory. In fact, Arminian clergy from the pulpit were forever telling people how holy their kings were and how they ought to obey them. Can you also see how Puritans would view it? It smacked of outright popery. It didn't help that Arminians regarded the Roman Catholic Church as the mother church, but one that had gone astray.

In the Parliament of 1628, a committee of the House of Commons condemned the pernicious spreading of the Arminian faction. Arminians responded by arguing that it was the Puritans who were the faction.

As king, Charles set out to do something about this. He appointed Arminians to key positions in the Church, most notably William Laud, who became his Archbishop of Canterbury in 1633. Laud and his fellow bishops stepped up inspections of local churches. These are called “visitations.” They enforced what they called the “beauty of holiness.” That meant moving communion tables from the center of the church to the east end and calling them altars. It meant enforcing the wearing of vestments. It meant banning unlicensed preachers. Who are they likely to be? They’re likely to be Puritans.

It meant attacking landowners who’d confiscated or appropriated tithes at the Reformation; they’ve got to give it back to the Church. They persecuted Puritans who opposed these changes in the prerogative courts—that is, the court of Star Chamber and the court of High Commission.

Their most famous case was one that took place in 1637 when the bishops condemned William Prynne, John Bastwick, and Henry Burton to have their ears cropped for writings critical of the bishops. Of course, this isn’t quite as brutal a punishment as Bloody Mary had imposed on the country, but if you’re a Puritan, look what’s happening. The monarch is now punishing good Protestants for Puritan thought.

On the day of punishment, a crowd cheered these men to the place where the ceremony was going to take place. Then they dipped their handkerchiefs in the blood. That should have told Charles and Laud something. Clearly, the religious peace that James I had worked so hard to promote was gone.

In other words, Charles and Laud had revived the issue of religion. To Puritans, if the return to ritual and hierarchy looked like a return to Rome, the revival of persecution reminded them of Bloody Mary. Perhaps their most compelling piece of evidence was the king’s wife.

Perhaps the most important thing Buckingham ever did in the mid-1620s, after the Spanish marriage blew up, was engineer a marriage between Charles and a French princess, Henrietta Maria. By the way, this is sometimes in Britain pronounced “Henrietta Ma-RYE-ah.” There is no conclusive source on how people said it in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

In Buckingham's defense, this marriage made a lot of diplomatic sense. England needed powerful friends, and France was powerful. This was before the war with France. The marriage also worked out domestically. After an initial period of coldness, Charles and Henrietta Maria got along like a house on fire. They loved each other. It's one of the great love stories of the English monarchy.

By the way, perhaps I should point out at this point that Charles and Buckingham did not have the same sort of relationship that Buckingham had had with James I. With the new king, Buckingham behaved in a way that was much more conventional.

This marriage produced six children, but it was an internal and political disaster, not least because as part of the marriage treaty, Henrietta Maria was allowed to have a Roman Catholic chapel at her court. You can still go see this at St. James Palace. She was allowed to be served by priests. She was allowed to have a mass every day.

Most people worried that she advised the king and would convert him to Rome, or that she would raise their numerous children as Catholics. In fact, what nobody knew was that this was exactly what the pope had secretly asked her to do.

Today, in our secular and tolerant age, you're listening to this and you're saying, "So what? The king's an Anglican. The queen's a Catholic." Try to think of it this way. One way to understand the English fear of international Catholicism in the 17<sup>th</sup> century is to compare it with the American fear of international Communism in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Both groups were widely viewed as godless, amoral, and ruthless and as opposed to everything for which the country stood. They were supported by powerful forces from abroad. They were secret societies, and so capable of infiltrating the country's most important and cherished institutions and hatching the most diabolical plots, whether it's blowing up the Houses of Parliament or poisoning the drinking water.

Now that you see this parallel (assuming that this works for you), imagine that during the most dangerous period in the Cold War, the First Lady of

the United States, Mamie Eisenhower or Jacqueline Kennedy, is a publicly acknowledged, card-carrying member of the Communist Party. Now imagine that she not only has the president's ear, but that she's filled the White House with her fellow sympathizers and that every day there's a little Party rally at which the truths of Marxism-Leninism are espoused.

Now imagine that the presidency is hereditary and that she is paving the way for the future Communist takeover by ensuring that her children are being raised in the best traditions of Marxism-Leninism and are next in line for the job. Now do you get it? Do you understand why English men and women who remembered Bloody Mary, the Armada, the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre, the Northern Rebellion, the Ridolfi Plot, the Babington Plot, and 5 November might be worried?

Wasn't it suspicious too that Charles I followed his father's policy of not persecuting Catholics? While he enthusiastically persecuted Puritans?

In fact, the truth is that Charles I was no Catholic. If the king was married to a Catholic, it's because that marriage made the most diplomatic sense at the time. If Charles was soft on Catholics, it's because he realized that they were a tiny minority and posed no danger to the English state. If he was hard on Puritans, it's because he saw them as a far greater danger with their revolutionary ideas. These reasons made perfect sense to Charles I and his court circle at Whitehall—and nobody else.

Remember, I told you that this king made no attempt to propagandize his people. Nobody's doing any explaining. Nobody was explaining why the king was persecuting Puritans and not persecuting Catholics. That left his people to imagine that he was a secret Catholic and that his secret plan was to establish a Catholic absolutist state such as obtained in Spain or France.

These concerns came to a head in the Parliament of 1629. Once again, as usual, Parliament met in the middle of a financial depression, this time in the textile trade. Once again, the king needed money to fight a war. Once again, Parliament refused to vote money until their grievances over illegal taxation, the Impositions, and religion (now they're worried about religion) were addressed.

The lower house, the Commons, voted to assist merchants in paying the Impositions: “We don’t agree with this tax; it wasn’t voted by us. We will help you.” It also voted to condemn the Arminian clergy. For Charles, enough is enough. He decided to send Parliament home again. On 2 March, the speaker announced an adjournment, which some members interpreted as the first step towards dissolution.

At this point, one of the most outspoken Protestant members, Sir John Elliot, rose to offer a series of resolutions. The speaker of the House tried to cut off debate by rising from his chair, which is the traditional signal that everybody is supposed to stop talking. At this point, two members of Parliament rushed the chair, and one of them, Denzil Holles, shouted “Zounds! You shall sit as long as this House pleases.”

Utter pandemonium breaks out. As Elliot continues with his motion, the king’s serjeant-at-arms is battering at the door with his mace. The House sat long enough to pass three resolutions that anyone paying the Impositions, anyone counseling their collection, and anyone intending innovation in religion was “a capital enemy to the kingdom and commonwealth.”

Stop and think about it. Who was urging the Impositions? Who was changing the religion of the country? It was Charles. They had just said that either the king’s closest advisors (Laud) or Charles himself were capital enemies to the kingdom and commonwealth (of course, not in so many words).

The English constitution is predicated on the notion that the king was God’s lieutenant, that he embodied the will of the people, and that he could do no wrong. It should be obvious to you that the English constitution has reached a crisis point. It should not be surprising to you that after this experience, Charles I sent Parliament home with the intention of not calling them again for a very long time—maybe never.

Parliament stayed home for the next 11 years. This period of time is sometimes referred to as “the personal rule,” though I’ve always had trouble with that terminology because, of course, kings have always ruled personally. Obviously, in this case, Charles is ruling a little more personally, and the English people are taking it personally, as you will see.

In the king's view, Parliament had violated fundamentally the English constitution by trying to interfere in the prerogatives of the Crown. In trying to rule without them, the chief difficulty would seem to be, on the surface, that of money. He's always needed Parliament for money. Charles I had two choices, and he pursued them both. He both cut his expenditure and he raised his revenue.

He cut his expenditure first by suing for peace with both Spain and France. This allowed him to disband his forces. He also stopped the performance of masques and the purchase of expensive artwork. He launched a reform of the administration that matched what Laud was doing in the Church. At the same time, the administration of Ireland was being reformed by Thomas Wentworth, Earl of Strafford. We're going to talk about that in the next lecture. I want you to bear it in mind.

At home, the man in charge was Lord Treasurer Weston. His program for reforming the administration came to be known as "thorough." Thorough was a code word for eliminating useless offices, eliminating sliding fees to establish salaries, and establishing commissions to watch over Ireland, the militia, and trade.

Charles also raises revenue. He increased the customs rates again—more Impositions. He sold more monopolies. He farmed out government services. He collected more fines against Catholics (Puritans liked that one). He searched old medieval statute books for any right, fee, or tax that he could legally collect. He revived old forest laws and fines. He revived an old payment to the king called "distraint of knighthood," whereby, if he knighted you, you had to pay the king a fee. Suddenly, the king is knighting people like crazy. People are running away, saying, "I don't want to be a Sir. Leave me alone."

Finally, he extended the payment of "ship money." Ship money was a tax on port cities. The idea was that the king collects money from ports and builds a navy to protect their trade. It makes perfect sense. He extends this tax to the whole country: Inland towns now have to pay ship money, which, by the way, I'll remind you is exactly how our taxes work today. Everybody pays for the navy. In 1635, this was brand new.

On a purely fiscal level, these policies worked. By 1638, the revenue rose to nearly £1 million a year, and the royal debt fell to manageable levels. These initiatives were wildly unpopular, however, in particular ship money. Former members of Parliament argued that it was the king who was now fundamentally violating the English constitution by collecting unparliamentary taxes and infringing upon the property rights of his subjects.

Resistance began in 1635. In 1636, a wealthy Buckinghamshire landowner named John Hampden refused to pay ship money on the grounds that it was only legal in a state of emergency. He lost his case, but just barely. A panel of 12 judges voted seven to five in favor of the king, which means that five royal judges agreed with Hampden. That was considered a moral victory, and people stopped paying ship money.

In fact, by 1638, the gentry who were supposed to assess and collect the king's taxes—remember, local government is in the hands of unpaid local officials, country gentlemen—the same ones who sat in Parliament—they're not collecting ship money. They're looking the other way when people won't pay it.

In 1637, the ship money assessments yield 89 percent of what they were estimated to yield. In 1638, that number went down to 39 percent. In 1639, it was only 20 percent. The personal rule, and with it order in the localities, was breaking down.

By the late 1630s, Charles I was walking a dangerous tightrope. While he had raised his revenue and cut his expenses, the growing tax strike meant that any crisis would send him into debt, bankruptcy, and the need to recall an angry Parliament.

As we shall see in the next lecture, Charles fell off his tightrope in 1637 as a result of a crisis of his own making in his ancestral northern kingdom in Scotland because of that old vexed problem of religion.

# Crisis of the Three Kingdoms: 1637–42

## Lecture 31

The Long Parliament would seek to solve England's constitutional problems in a parliamentary direction, but its more radical legislation would actually drive many moderates to the king's side. By the fall of 1642, there would be a complete breakdown of understanding between king and Parliament, the result of which would be the declaration of civil war in England.

When the Stuarts ascended the English throne in 1603, they retained the separate Crown of Scotland. James I had hoped for a legal union between the two countries. But the English Parliament, full of prejudice against the Scots, refused. Instead, James ruled Scotland from London through a separate Privy Council and Parliament in Edinburgh. The Scots felt like second-class citizens.

Charles continued this arrangement, seeking unity through religion. He wanted to bring the structure and usage of the Presbyterian Kirk closer to those of the Church of England. In 1637, he decreed that the Scots should use a special version of the English Book of Common Prayer, to be enforced by the Scottish bishops. This produced rioting in Edinburgh at the first service following the new Prayer Book. Subsequently, representatives of nearly every important group in Scottish society signed the National Covenant, which stated that only the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church could make religious policy for Scotland.

Later that year, the Covenanters abolished the Scottish bishops. Charles could only view this as rebellion. In the winter of 1638–1639, he called on English lords lieutenants to raise the militia in order to teach the Scots a lesson in the First Bishop's War. But these forces were hastily assembled, were poorly trained and funded, and had little will to attack fellow Protestants for an unpopular king. They began to drift away before reaching the border.

In the meantime, the Scots Covenanters raised an army of their own, which remained in following the inconclusive Treaty of Berwick of 1639. By April



1640, the king, desperate for funds for another army, called a Parliament. But Parliament would not vote him funds until he heard the members' grievances. He dismissed them, giving rise to the historical nickname "the Short Parliament."

That summer, order broke down in England. Few paid their taxes. The City of London refused to lend the king more money. Isolated rioting broke out. The Covenanter army marched into England, precipitating the Second Bishop's War. In August, they defeated a thrown-together English force at Newburn, Northumberland. This left the Scots occupying the counties of Northumberland and Durham. It left Charles with no choice but to agree to the Treaty of Ripon, by which the king promised to pay the Covenanter army £850 a day! This forced him to call a Parliament and let it sit.

The Long Parliament would sit, in one form or another, to 1653 and would not be finally dissolved until 1660. During the summer of 1641, elections were contested, often for the first time, all over England. That is, for the first time, voters had a real choice. One set of candidates may not have been happy with the king's policies during the personal rule, but they would follow him loyally. They intended to vote him the money for an army and hope that he would then listen to their grievances. The other side intended legislation to safeguard the position of Parliament, the members' property, and the Church of England as a Protestant establishment. The second set of men won in a landslide. John Pym, member for Tavistock, soon emerged as the leader of this parliamentary opposition. He planned to use the threat of the Scottish army and the power of the purse to force the king to agree to legislation outlawing the policies of the personal rule.

Parliament addressed the issue of sovereignty by passing a Triennial Act, requiring the king to call it into session at least once every three years; abolishing the prerogative courts, that is, the Star Chamber, High Commission, Requests, and Councils of Wales and the North; and impeaching the king's ministers, Archbishop Laud and Thomas, Earl of Strafford. Parliament addressed the financial problem by outlawing the Impositions, monopolies, ship money, distraint of knighthood, and the revival of the forest laws. Parliament addressed the problem of religion by abolishing the ecclesiastical courts and censorship by the bishops. The

king, desperate for money and an army, gave his consent reluctantly and, he hoped, temporarily. He and the court bided their time, waiting for the country to come to its senses.

In fact, as Pym's measures grew more radical, many peers and MPs did lose sympathy for Pym and gain it for the king. This transformation occurred by the summer 1641 when Pym presented three radical proposals:

- The Root and Branch Bill, which sought to eliminate the bishops "root and branch";
- The Ten Propositions, which called for a purge of Catholics from the court and limitations on the king's right of appointment to offices;
- The Grand Remonstrance, which called for reform of the Church of England in a Puritan direction.

Many members felt that these measures went too far: When the Grand Remonstrance came to a vote in November 1641, the Commons split 159 for/148 against. But just as it looked as if the tide might turn against Pym, his position was saved by a rebellion in the third kingdom.

The English government's treatment of the Catholic Irish population (both Gaelic and Old English) after the O'Neill Rebellion laid the seeds for the Rebellion of 1641. After the Flight of the Earls in 1607, the Crown imposed "plantation" on Ulster. Catholic Irish landlords and some tenant farmers were uprooted and transported to the barren western lands of Connaught. They were replaced by Scots Presbyterians, the "New English." The remaining Catholic Irish tenants became virtual serfs.

The New English Protestants dominated the Irish Parliament. The Crown played them off against the Old English and Gaelic populations, both of which sought an easing of penal laws against Catholics and an end to plantations. In 1641, the Gaelic clans of Ulster, taking advantage of England's current disunity, rebelled. The rebellion turned bloody, with some 12,000 New English settlers slaughtered outright by resentful Catholic tenants or

allowed to die of exposure and starvation. The Old English were repulsed by the bloodshed, but believing that the rebels were truly on the Royalist side (because they opposed the Presbyterians who were aligned with Pym and the Covenanters), they joined with them in the Confederation of Kilkenny.

By the time news reached England, the number of dead had been inflated to 200,000. The result was widespread panic and fear that the king would

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**Catholic Irish landlords and some tenant farmers were uprooted and transported to the barren western lands of Connaught. They were replaced by Scots Presbyterians, the “New English.” The remaining Catholic Irish tenants became virtual serfs.**

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use the Catholic Irish rebel troops to impose absolutism and Catholicism on the country. Obviously, an army was needed to pacify Ireland, but Parliament would not trust the king with its command. This issue cost Charles control of London.

In December 1641, Parliament passed a Militia Bill entrusting command of the army to a lord general whom it would name. This stripped the king of his most fundamental responsibility: that of defending the country. At the same time, a group of Puritan merchants seized control of the London city government, depriving the Crown of city funding and the London militia, known as the “trained bands.” On 4 January 1642,

the king entered the House of Commons with a guard to arrest Pym and four other parliamentary leaders. Having received advance intelligence, they had fled, much to the king’s embarrassment. Armed conflict was now probably inevitable.

In the spring of 1642, both sides called out the militia against the other. Charles put his queen and younger children on a boat for the Continent, then fled the capital for the north. On 22 August 1642, Charles I raised the royal standard at Nottingham—in effect, declaring war against his own Parliament. ■

## Suggested Reading

Bucholz and Key, *Early Modern England*, chap. 7, secs. 6–8.

Coward, *Stuart Age*, chap. 6.

Kishlansky, *Monarchy Transformed*, chap. 6.

Lockyer, *Early Stuarts*, chaps. 15–17.

## Questions to Consider

1. Why did Charles I want to impose an Anglican liturgy on the Scottish people? Why did he think that he could get away with it?
2. Why was the Irish Rebellion so frightening to English Protestants? Why did they suspect that Charles I might have been behind it? Why did they think that he might have been a Catholic?

# **Crisis of the Three Kingdoms: 1637–42**

## **Lecture 31—Transcript**

By the 1630s, the problems of sovereignty, finance, foreign policy, religion, and local control had brought the nation to a constitutional crisis. As we saw in the last lecture, Charles I tried to solve that crisis in an absolutist direction by ruling without Parliament. In order to do so, he'd have to keep the country quiet and live within a budget. In the end, as we shall see in this lecture, he failed to do either because of a crisis of his own making in his ancestral Stuart kingdom of Scotland.

This lecture examines that crisis, namely Charles I's attempt to impose an Anglican liturgy on Presbyterian Scotland, the resulting National Covenant, and Bishops' Wars, the calling of the Long Parliament, and the Irish Rebellion in 1641.

The Long Parliament would seek to solve England's constitutional problems in a parliamentary direction, but its more radical legislation would actually drive many moderates to the king's side. By the fall of 1642, there would be a complete breakdown of understanding between king and Parliament, the result of which would be the declaration of civil war in England.

To understand how that happened, we have to leave Charles's southern kingdom and head north. As we have seen, in 1603, King James VI of Scotland became James I of England. James hoped to unite his two countries into one. From the first, he styled himself King of Great Britain, France, and Ireland.

I should perhaps explain at this point that that old claim to the French throne that goes back to Henry V and Henry VI was still in the English title. No one really believed it anymore, of course, and it wasn't realizable, but it was always a good excuse if you wanted to start a war with the French. It wouldn't finally be repudiated until 1763.

James I redesigned the coinage and designed a union flag similar to the present one. He asked his first Parliament to enact a legal union with his northern kingdom. After heated debate, the union was rejected by the House

of Commons. The official reason was they said that it would be too hard to merge the two legal systems. The real reason the Commons rejected union with Scotland was the long legacy of animosity and violence between these two peoples.

During these debates, English MPs pushed the boundaries of free speech. One, referring to Scotland's violent political history, said, "They've not suffered above two kings to die in their beds these 200 years." Another said that a union between the English and the Scots would be like that between a jailor and his prisoner. Later in 1640, an Anglican clergyman would opine that, "If Scots went to heaven, you might as well let the devil in too." Clearly, these two people didn't like each other very much. The English viewed the Scots as impoverished savages and not as potential countrymen.

In the absence of a union, James was like the chairman of two boards. That is, he ruled England from London through the English Privy Council and Parliament. He ruled Scotland from London as well through a separate Scottish Privy Council and Parliament that met in Edinburgh. Since Scottish policy was obviously set at Whitehall, often on the advice of English courtiers, the Scots felt like second-class citizens. The fact that James only ever visited Scotland one more time, in 1617, and that Charles delayed his coronation until 1633 did nothing to allay these feelings.

Still, James was by and large a pretty effective ruler of Scotland. He kept the Scottish nobility in check. He pacified the wild Scottish Highlands and the Border Lands. He even persuaded the Kirk to concede some limited authority to the Scottish bishops. James would have loved to have made everyone in Scotland an Anglican. He would have loved for the Kirk to conform to the Church of England, but he knew that such a process would take a very long time with a maximum of friendly persuasion and a minimum of brute prerogative force.

Unfortunately, Charles I inherited neither his father's intellectual gifts, nor his gifts for compromise. Charles was too stupid to see that the Scots couldn't be forced to be Anglicans. I think I've made the point many times that Charles I was not an easygoing man. He was obsessed with order and uniformity. He wanted to do for the Scottish Church what Lord Weston had

done for the royal finances, what the Earl of Strafford was doing in Ireland (we'll talk about that at the end of this lecture), and what Laud was doing for the Church of England. That is, he wanted to bring the structure and usage of the Presbyterian Kirk into line with those of the Church of England.

In 1637, just when he least needed trouble, Charles I decreed, without consulting the Scottish Privy Council and over the protests of the Presbyterian clergy, that the Scots should from henceforward use a special version of the English Book of Common Prayer to be enforced by the Scottish bishops.

Maybe Charles thought he could get away with this because he was, after all, God's lieutenant, or because Scotland was notoriously divided between Highlands and Lowlands, urban dwellers and farmers, lairds (small gentlemen) and clergy, and, of course, rival clans that had hated each other for 1,000 years. But as anyone who has ever labored under ineffective leadership knows, one of its few virtues is that it often produces unity in opposition to it. That's exactly what Charles I did. He managed to unite this ununitable country against himself and this Prayer Book.

This became clear at the inaugural celebration of the new liturgy at St. Giles Cathedral in Edinburgh on 23 July 1637. When the Archbishop of Edinburgh began, a group of maidservants strategically seated in the front row, shouted, "The mass has come in amongst us!" With righteous Protestant fury, they threw a milking stool at the stunned archbishop.

He wisely withdrew, but not before being almost beaten to death on the way to his carriage. This is not exactly what Charles and Laud meant by "the beauty of holiness."

Much more seriously, in February 1638, representatives from nearly every important constituency in Scotland—aristocrats, merchants, professionals, and Presbyterian clergy (only Catholics were excluded, of course)—signed a National Covenant to oppose the king's religious policies. The Covenant bound them to remain united to each other and to uphold true religion against Laudian innovation and popery. It also stated that only the general assembly of the Presbyterian Church had the right to make religious policy

for Scotland. In other words, King Charles couldn't make religious policy in Scotland.

Later that year, the Covenanters abolished the Scottish bishops and declared episcopacy incompatible with the Kirk. All of James's friendly persuasion had gone for naught. It had been undone by his son.

Charles could only view these actions as rebellion, so in the winter of 1638–1639, he called on the English lords lieutenants to raise the militia in order to teach the Scots a lesson in what would be come to be called the “First Bishop's War.”

These forces were hastily assembled and poorly trained. We're talking about the militia. Kentishmen didn't want to leave Kent to fight on behalf of an unpopular king against fellow Protestants. That just wasn't going to work, so as they began to march north, the army got smaller and smaller. Note how this highlights the problems of the English administrative system. The king didn't have enough money to pay for a real army, and he depended upon a system of local government, which depended on the good will of those lords lieutenants and the people who raised the militia in order to enforce his policy. Clearly, the problem with local control, the problem of foreign policy, and the problem of finance all come together to provide defeat in the First Bishop's War.

In the meantime, the Scots Covenanters had raised an army of their own. Inspired by religious fervor, this army remains in being following the inconclusive Treaty of Berwick in 1639.

By April 1640, the king is desperately short of funds. He needs funds for another army. He is forced to call his first Parliament since 1629. Of course, we know what's going to happen, don't we? That body has saved up 11 years of grievances. They aren't even going to think about raising an army for the king or about giving him the money to do so until he addresses those grievances. They think that if they did give the king an army, he'd probably use it on the Scots, and then he would turn it on them.



Since Charles had no desire to hear their grievances, he dismissed this Parliament in disgust, hence the name it has borne ever since. “The Short Parliament” sat for only a few days in the spring of 1640.

That summer, order, which was already under strain, began to break down all over England. Fewer and fewer people were paying their taxes. The City of London refused to lend the king more money. Isolated rioting broke out. The Covenanter army began to march south into England. This precipitated the Second Bishop’s War.

In August, the Covenanters defeated a thrown-together English force under the Earl of Strafford at Newburn, Northumberland. That defeat of the English had three effects. First, it left the Scots occupying the counties of Northumberland and Durham, so one of the Tudors’ worst nightmares, which was that the Scots would rise up and invade, has now taken place.

Second, it left the king with no choice. He had to agree to the Treaty of Ripon, by which the Covenanter army would remain in being and he would pay for it to the tune of £850 a day.

Third, clearly the king was going to have to call Parliament and let it sit. He needed £850 a day. In fact, the point of calling this Parliament is to raise money to pay for the Scottish army according to the terms of the Treaty of Ripon, and then to raise an army to defeat them.

In fact, this Parliament would be called “the Long Parliament,” because it would sit in one form or other until 1653 and not be fully dismissed—nor dissolve itself—until 1660.

During the fall of 1640, elections took place all over England and for the first time in English history, these were contested elections. Remember, as I think I’ve explained, up to this point, elections for the House of Commons had been *pro forma* affairs. The local aristocracy would gather in a smoke-filled room; they’d pick one of their number (“It’s your turn to go to London”); they would instruct their tenants, “Vote for Bill;” and then Bill would take a seat. This is what Professor Mark Kishlansky calls, “parliamentary selection,” not parliamentary election.

For the first time in English history, most constituencies in England had contested elections. That meant there were two candidates, and these two candidates represented a choice. On the one hand, you had the candidates who were loyal to the king. Maybe they didn't like the policies of the personal rule, but the king was still the king and they felt it their solemn duty to meet and vote him an army and hope that he would then listen to their grievances. This is what good subjects and good Christians did.

On the other side were people who said, "The king is the king, but we have 11 years of grievances, and he's going to have to do something about them before we'll vote him an army." They intended to use the current state of emergency (the problem of foreign policy) to force him to agree to legislation repudiating the policies of the personal rule and safeguarding the position of Parliament within the constitution (the problem of sovereignty), safeguarding their property (the problem of royal finance), and safeguarding the Church of England as a Protestant establishment (the problem of religion). Those four big areas of tension now come down to the fifth: the problem of local control. What's going to happen in the hustings? What's going to happen in the country at large?

In the end, you can probably predict what happened. The second set of men, the ones who wanted change and had grievances, won in a landslide. This Parliament meets at the end of 1640 and very soon a leader emerges. His name is John Pym. He's the member for Tavistock. His plan is to use the threat of the Scots army and the power of the purse to force the king to agree to a sweeping program of legislation that would outlaw the policy that Charles had pursued during the personal rule.

Specifically, I'll go through the areas of tension. First, Parliament addressed the issue of sovereignty. The first thing it did was pass a bill forbidding the king from dissolving them. Next, it passed a Triennial Act, which required the king to call Parliament into session at least once every three years. This Parliament also abolished the prerogative courts by which the king had enforced "thorough" and the policies of personal rule. The courts of Star Chamber, High Commission, Requests, and Councils of Wales and the North were all gone.

Then, it impeached the king's leading ministers, namely Archbishop Laud and Thomas Wentworth, Earl of Strafford. I'm going to go out of order here. I'm going to talk about Strafford later in this lecture when we talk about Ireland because he's mainly associated with his policies in Ireland. Right now, I'm going to kill him, but you should be aware of the fact that I will bring him back to life later. Historians don't have much power, but they can do that.

Strafford was regarded by many parliamentary leaders as the evil genius behind "thorough" and the greatest threat to their hold over the king. He's a military man. He's famously ruthless. They want to get rid of him. Strafford is tried first in March 1641. As you might expect from such a man, he mounted an impressive defense. After the trial proceeds awhile, the parliamentary leaders realize that they might not win this thing. They might lose it in the House of Lords, which Strafford sits in, so they decide instead to resort to parliamentary attainder.

You will remember what attainder is. This is having a vote in Parliament deciding that somebody has committed treason without the inconvenience of having to have a trial and presenting evidence. Strafford was attainted. There's a famous series of meetings before Parliament decides to do this, because they realize they're pushing the envelope of the law. It was finally decided that because Strafford was such a danger to the parliamentary program and he was the one most likely to advise the king to close Parliament down, he had to be killed. The only good Strafford was a dead Strafford, or as the Earl of Essex put it, "Stone dead hath no fellow."

Strafford was attainted and executed in May 1641. Laud suffered the same fate in 1644.

Parliament also addressed the financial problem. They outlawed the Impositions, monopolies (monopolies finally go), ship money, distraint of knighthood, and the revival of the forest laws. Parliament addressed the problem of religion by abolishing the ecclesiastical courts and abolishing the censorship of the bishops.

Parliament did not address the issue of foreign policy, because to do that, they would have had to raise an army. They wanted that problem to stay on the table.

Each of these measures was quite radical. All significantly reduced the prerogative of the Crown. In effect, Parliament knew that it was departing from the English constitution. It argued that it departed from that constitution in order to preserve it from the even worse tyranny of the personal rule.

Of course, it's a fundamental plank of the English constitution that all legislation must be approved by the king. What did Charles I do? On every one of these issues, the ball was at some point in his court. What would he do with it? In every case, even in Strafford's attainder, the king gave his consent. He knew that with a Scottish army on the doorstep and order breaking down in the countryside, he had no choice. He needed parliamentary funding. First, he needed it to pay the Covenanter army and, of course, he needed it to fight them.

In the process, England became, for a few months in 1641, a constitutional monarchy. Of course, you know that Charles agreed to every one of these laws unwillingly and temporarily. He knew that he had to agree now, but he was hoping that as Parliament became more radical—as they tried to shackle him more tightly—that there would be a reaction in his favor.

Remember too that Charles and his court had been raised with divine-right beliefs. They believed so fully that God's power had been given to the king that they believed that to cooperate with Parliament in reducing that power was to attack the Great Chain of Being. It was in fact a mortal sin.

Charles I pretended to go along. He bided his time, waiting for the country to come to its senses and waiting for an opening. In fact, there's a lot to be said for this strategy. Pym and his colleagues knew full well that they couldn't trust the king. They feared that given half a chance that he would turn on them. As we've indicated, if they ever gave him the money for an army, they knew that he'd use it to defeat the Scots, and then they suspected that he'd turn it on them, imprison their leaders, repudiate the legislation of 1641, and turn England into an absolutist and Catholic state.

It's very important that you understand that that was not in fact Charles I's intention, but as we've said again and again in this course, perception is everything in politics, and this is what people thought. They thought they knew the king, and they thought that what he had in mind was to turn England into France.

Instead of voting the money for an army, the parliamentary leaders not only didn't vote the money, they actually communicated with the Scots Covenanters. They actually wrote secretly to them saying, "Keep up the pressure." This was treason. They're encouraging rebellion, but they did it in order to maintain their position in Parliament. In the meantime, they passed ever-more radical legislation to limit the king's power.

Of course, you realize that this has a built-in catch-22. The more Parliament fears the king, the more radical Parliament's legislation. The more radical Parliament's legislation, the more moderate members are scared off, wrecking the coalition that had come to power in 1640. This became clear in the fall of 1641, when Parliament debated three radical proposals: the Root and Branch Bill, the Ten Propositions, and the Grand Remonstrance.

The Root and Branch Bill began life as a monster petition. That is, over 15,000 people signed a petition that demanded that the bishops be eliminated. It wasn't about establishing a national Arbor Day. What they wanted was for the bishops to be abolished "root and branch."

The Ten Propositions called for a purge of Catholics from the court. Maybe Henrietta Maria could stay, but everybody else has to go. It also called for limitations on the king's right to appoint to offices.

Finally, the Grand Remonstrance was a 240 point-by-point attack on the whole reign of Charles I. It concluded with a call for a national synod to reform the Church of England in a Puritan direction.

Many members agreed with these measures, but a large number thought that they went too far. The Root and Branch Bill and the Grand Remonstrance looked to conservative members like an attack on their beloved Anglican Church. These people may not have loved the bishops, but they loved their

ceremonies and rituals. They loved the Book of Common Prayer. The Ten Propositions attacked a king's right to choose his own servants. What's the point of being king if you can't name your own ministers?

When the Grand Remonstrance came to a vote on 22 November 1641, debate lasted long into the night. Swords were drawn in the House of Commons. In the end, when the vote was finally called, the House split 159 for the Grand Remonstrance and 148 against. Those 148 nays were the nucleus of a Royalist party. Charles I's patience had paid off. Bad as the personal rule had been, his argument was that a parliamentary tyranny would be worse, and many MPs were coming to agree with him.

Unfortunately for Charles, just when it looked like Pym and his leadership might fall, they were saved by a crisis in Ireland. Let's return to Ireland. We haven't visited it in quite some time. After the defeat of the O'Neill Rebellion in 1603 and the Flight of the Earls in 1607–1608, the Crown imposed "plantation" on Ulster. That is, Catholic Irish landlords (both Gaelic and Old English) and some tenant farmers were uprooted and transported to the barren western lands of Connaught. They were replaced by Scots Presbyterians, the "New English." We're not sure how many New English came. I've seen numbers ranging from 20,000 to 100,000 new landlords.

The remaining Catholic Irish tenants became virtual serfs paying exorbitant rents to these Protestant landlords. The New English Protestants now dominated the Irish Parliament as well.

In the 1630s, the Crown's Lord Deputy was Thomas Wentworth, Earl of Strafford. I'm reviving him. I know that he will be dead in 1641, but we've moved back to the 1630s in Ireland. He decided to play all these groups off against each other. What he did was promise Catholics that he would see what he could do about easing the penal laws. He promised Protestants that he would see what he could do about "jacking them up" (applying them more forcefully).

He also combined this duplicity with rapacious authoritarianism. He offended Catholics by continuing the penal laws and continuing the plantations. He offended Protestants by establishing a court of High Commission to make

sure that everyone was a good Laudian Anglican, even though, remember, most of these Protestants are Presbyterian. The same thing that's going on in Scotland is going on in Ireland. He also offended both groups by confiscating lands that had once been owned by the Church and returning them to the Church.

In the end, Strafford's Irish policies worked in the sense that they made the Crown more powerful. They strengthened its control, but they also worsened old religious and political tensions and they made Strafford the most powerful, most wealthy, and most hated man in Ireland.

In the fall of 1641, the Gaelic Catholic clans of Ulster decided to do something about this. Strafford had been executed already. The situation in England was inchoate, and they thought that they could take advantage. They sensed that the crisis in England was their big chance, so Gaelic Catholic Irish rebelled, hoping that a weakened king in London would grant concessions and maybe even Catholic emancipation.

When they rebelled, the Gaelic Catholic peasants began to settle scores. The rebellion soon turned bloody. Some 4,000 New English settlers were slaughtered outright by their tenants. Eight thousand more were turned out of their homes and into the roads without the clothes on their back. They were actually stripped naked. The idea seemed to have been, "You came to Ireland with nothing, and you're going to leave Ireland with nothing." Many of those people died in the Irish winter.

Let's say there was a total death toll of maybe as high as 12,000. The Old English, who were also Catholic, were repulsed by the bloodshed, but they still believed that the rebels were on the right side, in that they were Catholic and that they were the truly Royalist side. You see, the New English—the Presbyterians—had sided with Pym and Parliament, so the Old English joined the Gaelic rebels in the Catholic Confederation of Kilkenny.

Now there's a rebellion in Ireland—Catholics against Protestants. The Irish Rebellion confirmed everything that Protestant English men and women thought about the Catholic Irish. By the time the news reached London, the number of those massacred was inflated to 200,000. Remember I said

about 12,000 perhaps; this number was now 200,000. There was a flood of pamphlets and woodcuts relating in lurid detail the atrocities being committed by Catholic peasants. As one contemporary account read, “No quarter is given, no faith kept, all houses burnt and demolished—man, wife, and child put to the sword.”

Into the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the New English Protestant land-owning class of Ireland would commemorate these events, very much like the Gunpowder Plot, in annual sermons to remind them and everybody else of what happened when the Catholics decided to rebel.

In London, the result was widespread panic: fear that the king would bring over the Catholic rebels and use them as his troops to fight not only the Covenanter army but to suppress Parliament, and eventually establish his absolutist Catholic regime that everyone thought he was interested in.

Obviously, an army was necessary to pacify Ireland, but Parliament wouldn't trust the king with its command. In December 1641, Parliament passed a Militia Bill, entrusting command of the army to a lord general that it would name. Note that they've now stripped the king of the last responsibility of any ruler, which is national self-defense.

Simultaneously, a group of Puritan merchants seized control of the London city government. This deprived the king of city funding and of the London “trained bands” (this was the London militia, the best militia in the country).

On 4 January 1642, the king reacted. He took the gloves off. Gathering about him a group of royal guards and courtiers, he entered the House of Commons with swords drawn, looking for Pym and four other parliamentary leaders. Unfortunately for Charles, courts are notorious for leaks, so Pym and his friends had been alerted and made their way out the back door. In the end, there's Charles I waving his sword in the House of Commons looking very foolish. By the way, it's for this reason that no subsequent English monarch has ever entered, to the best of my knowledge, the House of Commons. Every English king has to ask permission. That is a privilege that cannot be violated.



Within a month, Charles realizes that London is no longer safe for the royal family. He puts his queen and younger children on a boat for France, and then he himself flees the capital for the north. Armed conflict is now inevitable.

This isn't to say that anyone wanted war. These people had believed for centuries in the Great Chain of Being, and those beliefs were very hard to break, but no one seemed to know how to wage peace or find a way forward. Remember, they couldn't just stand still because of the Scottish invasion force right below their borders and the Irish Rebellion. These crises demanded solutions.

Each side began to arm itself. You know what happens when someone with whom you've disagreed arms themselves. You begin to wonder if they mean to use those weapons on you. Each side looks at the other arming itself and thinks, "This side intends war." Eventually, each side calls out the militia on the other.

Finally, on 22 August 1642, the anniversary of the battle of Bosworth Field, Charles I raises the royal standard at Nottingham. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, that means an open declaration of war. The king had declared war on his own Parliament.

In this lecture, we saw how the old tensions over sovereignty, finance, foreign policy, religion, and local control had all boiled over thanks to the policies of King Charles I. The worst nightmare of the Tudors and Stuarts, among many nightmares, had now been realized: a civil war between king and Parliament. In the end, the king's and Parliament's views of the English constitution were incompatible. Could they be solved by bloodshed? If so, who would win? Another question that everyone had to ask: What would be won in the end by making war on the king or by making war on Parliament?

Answers to those questions in the next lecture.

# The Civil Wars: 1642–49

## Lecture 32

**Just before 10:00 a.m. on the crisp morning of 30 January 1649, a very odd procession could be seen making its way from St. James Palace across St. James Park to Whitehall. ... At the center of this parade [was] a short but rather dignified bearded man, dressed all in black but for the brilliant blue sash and diamond-encrusted star of the Order of the Garter. ... That man, who was walking to his death, was Charles I**

**I**n 1642, both sides went to war reluctantly. Most people remained neutral, but we can identify certain tendencies among those who did take up arms. Royalists sided with the king, not because they thought his policies were right—many did not—but because they would not oppose God’s chosen son, and they saw his authority as the only bulwark against disorder. Parliamentarians opposed the king not because they wanted to abolish monarchy (at least not at first), but because they feared that Charles I was subverting the English Constitution in Church and State to introduce absolutist government and Roman Catholicism.

Who were the Royalists? Regionally, they came from the north and west. But this area was relatively poor; its chief industry was sheep-farming. Socially, the Royalists attracted most nobles, courtiers, and about half the gentry. In religion, the Royalists were drawn from High Anglicans and (the few) Catholics. Royalists came to be known as Cavaliers, from the Spanish *caballero* for horseman or knight.

Who were the Parliamentarians? Regionally, they came from the south and east, including London. Socially, they included many merchants and professionals (especially lawyers), about half the gentry, and (eventually) more ordinary people than the Royalists. In religion, the Parliamentarians attracted “Low Church” Anglicans and Puritans. They came to be known as Roundheads because the common people who fought in Parliament’s armies tended to wear their hair short, as most working people did then.

Clearly, Parliament had all the material advantages: the wealth of the southeast, London, and the merchants; the administrative expertise of the professional classes; and the potential to tap vast numbers of ordinary civilians. Later, it would become clear that Parliament had a secret weapon, the greatest cavalry commander of the age, Oliver Cromwell.

The king's forces did have one advantage: experienced commanders who had served as aristocratic volunteers in the Thirty Years' War. Could the king's forces use that experience to strike a knockout blow before Parliament marshaled its material wealth? The experience of the Royalist forces was the crucial factor early on. They won the first great battle, at Edgehill, Oxfordshire, on 23 October 1642. This opened the way to London, but Charles I was unable to take advantage. Still, by the fall of 1643, Parliament's situation was desperate. Pym negotiated the Solemn League and Covenant with the Scots. The Scots would supply their battle-hardened army. England would supply £30,000 per month to pay that army and promise to embrace Presbyterianism.

On 2 July 1644, a combined Scottish and Parliamentary force defeated a Royalist army at Marston Moor, Yorkshire. This cost the king control of the north. Still, this was not a permanent solution to Parliament's problems. The English did not really want Presbyterianism and the Scottish army was very expensive; remember, Parliament was fighting to keep taxes low. In the spring of 1645, Parliament authorized the New Model Army. It was to be a national army, not based on local militia (therefore, it could march anywhere without reluctance); a professional army staffed by officers chosen on merit, not birth or wealth, and soldiers paid regularly (in theory); and a godly army, that is, dominated by committed Puritans. Its commander was Sir Thomas Fairfax; its cavalry commander, Oliver Cromwell.

In June 1645, the New Model Army defeated the last major Royalist army in England at Naseby, Northamptonshire, effectively ending the first English Civil War. It was one thing to beat the king in battle; quite another to know what to do with him. Parliament had fought the war not to depose him or establish a new form of government, but to force him into limitations on his power. No one wanted to confront the deeper questions. What if the king would not accept limitations? Should England have a king at all? Knowing



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**King Charles I was held as a prisoner during the English Civil War. He was executed at Whitehall in January of 1649.**

this, Charles entered into a series of meaningless negotiations designed to split his enemies and buy time to raise another army, possibly in Ireland or even Europe. Parliament was already split between moderates (that is, Presbyterians) who wanted to restore a strong king and independents (that is, radical Puritans) who were willing to entertain less monarchy and more democracy. Other groups involved in negotiations included the Scots, who wanted Presbyterianism imposed on the whole British Isles, and the New Model Army, who wanted their pay, religious reform leading to toleration, and political reform, possibly leading to democracy.

The king negotiated with each group in turn in 1646–1648 but never in good faith. He believed that to give up one iota of his prerogative would be a grave sin, because in his view, that prerogative had been granted by God. In June 1647, King Charles escaped and contracted with the Scots for an army; in return, he agreed to establish Presbyterianism in England for three years.

This force was easily defeated by Cromwell and the New Model Army. This episode convinced Cromwell that there would be no peace in England while the king lived. But many in Parliament wanted to continue to negotiate with him.

On 6 December 1648, the Council of the Army ordered Col. Thomas Pride to expel the most moderate members of the House of Commons. Pride's Purge left about 110 of the most radical members, called the Rump. The Rump immediately convened a High Court of Justice to try the king in Westminster Hall. The charge was high treason. But treason was a crime against the king. How could Charles be guilty of treason against himself? Parliament's solution was to charge the king with committing treason against the English Constitution and the English people. This was a revolutionary idea: that a ruler's chief responsibility is not to God or himself but to the people over whom he rules.

But if the law was the king's law, then the courts were the king's courts. How could any court not summoned by the king be a real court? Charles responded to the charge by demanding to know by what authority the court sat. Parliament responded that it sat "in the name and in behalf of the people of England." In fact, the Rump was really more representative of the army and its narrow point of view than of the people.

Charles never recognized the legality of the court or pled to the charge. Given his refusal to plead, a guilty verdict and a death sentence were foregone conclusions. Charles I was executed at Whitehall Palace on 30 January 1649. For the first time in English history, the English people had judicially and publicly murdered their king. This action went against the Great Chain of Being and a thousand years of sermons, ceremonies, traditions, and other propaganda. Within weeks, the Rump Parliament abolished the monarchy and the House of Lords. England was now, for the first and only time in its history, a republic.

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**This was a revolutionary idea: that a ruler's chief responsibility is not to God or himself but to the people over whom he rules.**

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Many questions remained unanswered. Would England now settle down? Would the English people accept rule by the Rump and the army as they had once accepted rule by the Stuarts? Or would they demand that the revolution go farther and embrace such radical notions as democracy and religious toleration? On a deeper level, what did these events mean? Had the English people and their representatives committed a heinous act, murdering not only a king, but law and order and justice? Or had they taken the first step toward freedom from despotic rule? ■

### Suggested Reading

Bucholz and Key, *Early Modern England*, chap. 8, secs. 1–2.

Coward, *Stuart Age*, chap. 6.

Kishlansky, *Monarchy Transformed*, chaps. 6–7.

### Questions to Consider

1. Why did the sides divide up as they did in the English Civil Wars? What did victory have to offer each side?
2. Was the execution of King Charles I justified?

## The Civil Wars: 1642–49

### Lecture 32—Transcript

Just before 10:00 a.m. on the crisp morning of 30 January 1649, a very odd procession could be seen making its way from St. James Palace across St. James Park to Whitehall. A crowd stood, but silently, as the processors walked by. They consisted of two guards of soldiers, colors flying, and drums beating a dead march. Between them were a bishop, some courtiers, and, at the center of this parade, a short but rather dignified bearded man dressed all in black but for the brilliant blue sash and diamond-encrusted star of the Order of the Garter. This marked him as something more than common.

That man, who was walking to his death, was Charles I, by the grace of God, King of England, Scotland, and Ireland. What would we give to know what he was thinking at that moment? After all, he had processed through London many times before, but to cheering crowds. Now that crowd would witness his execution. He must have wondered how he had come to this pass, and that is the subject of this lecture.

In the past few lectures, we learned how it was that these three kingdoms, or at least a significant proportion of their ruling elites, had come to rebel against the king. We identified five areas of tension: the problems of sovereignty, government finance, foreign policy, religion, and local control. These had, by the late 1630s and early 1640s, overwhelmed the Stuart state and boiled over into civil war when the king raised the royal standard in anger at Nottingham in November 1642.

You should understand that both sides went to war very reluctantly. Most people tried to remain neutral. As you probably also understand, it is part of the necessary logic of war that people get drawn into it. They did take up arms. They chose sides according to the following tendencies. Those who supported the king, or “Royalists,” sided with him not because they thought his policies were right. Many of them didn’t, but they couldn’t contemplate opposing God’s chosen son. They saw the king’s authority as the only bulwark against disorder, which they always thought was fragile. These people tended to draw regionally from the north and the west, which were of course the poorest parts of the country, known mainly for sheep farming.

Socially, the king had the support of most of the nobility. He had most of the courtiers, but of course, courtiers have nothing to bring to the king. They're there to take from the king what he can give them.

The gentry split in half. In terms of religion, High Church Anglicans sided with the king, as did Catholics, but of course, Catholics amounted to only about 1 percent of the population. This group came to be known as Royalists or "Cavaliers" from the Spanish *caballero* for horseman or knight.

They were opposed by the Parliamentarians. These people opposed the king not because they wanted to abolish monarchy. Almost no one wanted that at first. They feared that Charles I was subverting the English constitution and Church and State to introduce absolute government and Roman Catholicism. These people tended to draw regionally from the south and the east, including London and the port cities—the wealthiest part of the country. They included merchants and professionals (especially lawyers), the other half of the gentry, of course, and eventually more ordinary people would end up supporting Parliament.

In terms of religion, these people tended to be what I'll call "Low Churchmen" (members of the Church of England, perhaps not quite Puritans, but not in love with ceremony and ritual) and Puritans. They came to be known as Roundheads because the common people who fought in Parliament's army tended to wear their hair short. In those days, if you were ordinary and you had to work for a living, you didn't have time to dress long hair.

I hope you've listened carefully to this list, for it's going to tell you who won the war. As I frequently point out to my students, any war that is not a guerilla war and that lasts more than a few weeks tends to be won not necessarily by the side with the cleverest generals or the bravest troops—what you might call the "right stuff"—but the side with the greatest material resources—the "most stuff." Think of the American Civil War. At the beginning of the war, at least, the South had all the best generals, but the North had the railroads and the munitions factories. We all know who won that one.

Clearly, Parliament had all the material advantages. It had the wealth of London. It had the ports that faced Europe. It had the merchants. It had the



administrative expertise of the professional classes. It had the administrative apparatus of the capital—all of the tax offices and where money had been collected—and it had a greater potential to tap vast numbers of ordinary citizens.

Later on, I'm going to argue that Parliament had a secret weapon—so secret that Parliament didn't even know it had it at first: the greatest cavalry commander of the age, Oliver Cromwell.

The king's forces did have one advantage that the Parliamentarians lacked: many of the king's commanders had served in war. They'd been aristocratic volunteers during the 1620s and 1630s. That is to say, many aristocrats didn't like James I's pacifism, so they went abroad and enlisted in the armies that fought during the Thirty Years' War. They came back in 1640–1642 with that experience.

The king's forces were far more used to making war than their opponents. The first English Civil War is a bit like the American Civil War. It's a race. Could the king's forces use their experience to strike a knockout blow before Parliament could marshal its material wealth? Put another way, could Parliament last long enough to overwhelm the king in men and materiel?

In the course of the following lecture, I'm not going to spend a lot of time detailing the campaigns and battlefield tactics of the war. I think its story is quickly told, and after all, I have already given you the punch line.

During the early campaigns at least, Royalist experience was a crucial factor. The Royalists won the first set piece battle of the war at Edgehill, Oxfordshire on 23 October 1642. This is the battle at which one Royalist commander, Sir Jacob Astley, uttered the famous line, "Oh Lord, though knowest how busy I must be today. If I forget thee, do not thou forget me. March on, boys."

The Lord didn't forget Astley. The Royalist cavalry under the king's nephew, Prince Rupert of the Rhine, smashed through the parliamentary force. This victory left the king in control of the West Midlands and opened the way to London. Charles I proved to be every bit as good a general as he was a politician. He wasted time mopping up resistance in the rear, and so he got

to London late. Eventually this allowed London to raise the trained bands. Prince Rupert was stopped at Turnham Green, a suburb of London that is now a tube stop on the District Line. The capital was saved.

By the fall of 1643, Parliament's situation was desperate. In part, this was because the parliamentary commanders were inexperienced and not terribly competent, as it turned out. In part, it was because both sides had built their armies on the local militia idea. I think I've explained the problem with this. If you were in the Kentish militia, you're perfectly happy to defend Kent, but you have no intention of marching to Yorkshire. Every time one of these armies would be on the move, it would get smaller and smaller.

The king tried to solve this problem by contracting with the Irish confederates under James Butler, Marquis of Ormond, for an Irish army. Unfortunately for Charles, his correspondence in this matter was actually discovered by the Parliamentarians when they captured a baggage train, and they published it. Here we have proof that the King of England is contracting with the Catholics for an army to sic on good English Protestants. This did nothing for the king's reputation in England.

In fact, the Royalists could charge that the Parliamentarians did the same thing. In 1643, John Pym, who was by now dying of cancer and would not outlive the year, negotiated the Solemn League and Covenant with the Scots. The Covenanters would agree to supply their army, battle-hardened from fighting in the Bishops' Wars. In return, the English Parliamentarians would supply them with £30,000 per month to pay that army, and they would promise to embrace Presbyterianism. As we will see, the Scots have one war aim, and it's not unlike Charles's: They want everybody in the British Isles to be a Presbyterian.

On 2 July 1644, this force, plus English armies from Yorkshire and East Anglia, defeated a major Royalist army at Marston Moor, Yorkshire, in the bloodiest battle of the war. The turning point came when the English cavalry, led by an obscure gentleman from Huntingdonshire named Oliver Cromwell, charged and routed Rupert's flank.

At this point, typical cavalry tactics in the 17<sup>th</sup> century were that you charged the infantry. If you broke through, you galloped off to the baggage train and captured all the treasure. That's not what Cromwell did. Instead, he wheeled around, came back, and supported the Scots infantry, and so destroyed the Royalists' center. Some 4,000 cavaliers were killed. The Puritan Cromwell wrote, "God made them as stubble to our swords."

As a result, the king lost the north.

Still, the Solemn League and Covenant was not the permanent answer to Parliament's problems. The English didn't really want to be Presbyterians. The Scottish army was very expensive. Pym had to come up with all sorts of new financial expedients to pay for it. He began to sequester Royalist lands, which of course made him even more unpopular with Royalists. He imposed a new tax called the "excise" (we would call this a sales tax) on those popular necessities beer, wine, cider, perry (which is made from pears), and tobacco. Maybe today we'd call this a sin tax, but these were necessities in an England in which the drinking water was not drinkable.

Remember, though, that Parliament was fighting to keep taxes low. Now taxes were higher than they had ever been. This caused a great deal of grumbling, but by 1645, it began to pay off, because Parliament could use its financial superiority to fund an army of its own.

In the spring of 1645, Parliament authorized the creation of a new kind of fighting force: the New Model Army. This army was first of all to be a national army. Soldiers from Kent would be mixed up with soldiers from Worcestershire, Yorkshire, etc. There wouldn't be all this complaining about marching outside of the borders of the county.

Second, it was to be a professional army staffed by officers chosen on merit, not by birth or wealth. Soldiers were to be paid regularly, at least in theory. Finally, it was a godly army. It was dominated by Puritans. Its commander was Sir Thomas Fairfax, and its cavalry commander was Oliver Cromwell.

On 14 June 1645, the New Model Army met the last major Royalist army in England at the Battle of Naseby in Northamptonshire. After a day of hard

fighting, Prince Rupert's Royalist cavalry charged, broke through, and ran off to capture the baggage train. That allowed Cromwell's more disciplined troops to wheel down the Royalist flank, cutting them to ribbons.

Mopping up operations continued into 1646, but to all intents and purposes, the first English Civil War was over. About one in eight adult males had seen combat. Maybe one in three bore arms at some point in the war. Over 180,000 people were killed. That's 3.6 percent of the population of England. This is the highest percentage of English men killed in any war including World War I.

Now what? What did they die for? You might think that with the military conflict decided, the issues that had led to the Civil War could now be settled. It was one thing to beat the king on the field of battle, but quite another to know what to do with him afterwards. Remember, we've seen rebellions and baronial wars in this course. This course began with Bolingbroke's rebellion against Richard II and the Wars of the Roses. Those conflicts all involved disputed successions: two rival candidates for king. In 1646, there was no rival candidate for the throne. Everyone conceded that Charles I was king. The question was what kind of a king should he be?

Parliament had fought the war not to depose him or establish a new form of government, but to make the king behave, specifically to get him to agree to limitations on his power. The question was what if he didn't agree to behave? What if he didn't agree to limitations?

The parliamentary general, the Earl of Manchester, put this best: "If we beat the king 99 times, he would be king still and his posterity and we his subjects still. But if he beat us but once, we should all be hanged and our posterity undone."

No one wanted to confront this deeper question: What if the king won't accept limitations? In fact, that was a different way of asking the question, "Should England have a king at all?"

Charles knew that no one wanted to confront this and so long as they didn't do so, he still held most of the cards. He'd lost the war, but he hadn't lost the

Crown. He was still the king. Charles I entered into a series of meaningless negotiations, the point of which was to split his enemies and bide time so that he could raise another army, possibly in Ireland or possibly in Europe.

It didn't help matters that there were quite a few parties to these negotiations. There was Parliament, of course, but Parliament was already splitting, with on one side moderates (usually Presbyterians in terms of their religious orientation) who wanted to restore a strong king. They wanted to negotiate with the king but leave his powers largely intact. On the other side of the parliamentary divide were Independents. They were more Puritan. They were more willing to entertain less monarchy. They wanted more democracy and more power for Parliament.

Don't forget, there are also the Scots, who just want to impose Presbyterianism on everybody, whether they want it or not. The New Model Army itself has become a power. It wants several things. It wants its back pay. Parliament doesn't want to pay it by 1647–1648. They would like to send the army to Ireland, where it would presumably get lost in a bog. They would like religious reform and maybe religious toleration. The army is also talking about political reform, maybe even democracy.

The king negotiates with each of these groups in turn from 1646–1648, but never in good faith. He believed, in fact, that to make any concession—to give up one iota of his prerogative—would be a grave sin, for in his view that prerogative was granted by God. He knew that this prevarication might prove fatal.

He wrote to Prince Rupert:

I confess that speaking as a mere soldier or statesman, there is no probability but of my ruin, yet as a Christian I must tell you that God will not suffer rebels and traitors to prosper, nor his cause to be overthrown. Whatever personal punishment it shall please him to inflict on me must not make me repine, much less give over this quarrel, which by the grace of God I am resolved against whatever it costs me. Indeed, I cannot flatter myself with expectation of

good success more than this: to end my days with honor and a good conscience.

For once, Charles's expectation would be fulfilled.

In June 1647, the king escaped from the army and contracted with the Scots for their army. In return, he agreed to a document called the "Engagement," in which, of course, he promised to establish Presbyterianism in England for three years. In fact, the Second Civil War was over almost before it began. The decisive battle was fought in July 1648 at Preston in Lancashire when Cromwell and the New Model Army crushed the Scots.

There are two significances to the brief Second Civil War. The first is that it left the New Model Army the undisputed military power in the British Isles. Nobody else could touch them. Secondly, it convinced Oliver Cromwell and the other army leaders that God had clearly declared for Parliament and that the king was resisting His judgment. Why the necessity of fighting a Second Civil War? Cromwell and his men wanted to know what was the point of this? It's at this point that they began to refer to Charles as "that man of blood." It's at this point that they concluded that only the removal of the king would bring peace to England.

On 6 December 1648, the Council of the Army ordered Colonel Thomas Pride to march on Parliament. The army knew that there were many members of Parliament—Presbyterians—who still wanted to negotiate with the king, even after the Second Civil War. His orders were to expel those moderate members. Pride's Purge left about 110 of the most radical members. Remember, we started off with nearly 500 people, and then all the Royalists left in 1642. Now even moderate Parliamentarians are gone. We're down to a "rump" of 110 members. In fact, this became known as the "Rump Parliament," which, as I'm sure you can imagine, was a bonanza for political cartoonists.

The Rump immediately convened a High Court of Justice to try the king. The trial opened on Saturday, 20 January 1649, in Westminster Hall, the greatest medieval hall in England. For one week, the interior of the hall presented a remarkable tableau. At its south end, seated on red velvet benches

underneath the arms not of the king but of England, were the commissioners of the court and members of the House of Commons. Before them, on the floor, was an array of justices and lawyers all in black, presided over by a heretofore obscure judge named John Bradshaw. At the north end and in the upper galleries were crowds of spectators held back by wooden rails and the soldiers of the New Model Army dressed in their red coats.

Then, in the middle of the hall, on the other side of the bar of the House, in a sort of box or dock, was a solitary figure in black, but for that brilliant blue and silver of the star and garter: the king.

In fact, despite all of this pomp and circumstance, everything about the trial was problematical. Take the charge. The commissioners decided to charge the king with high treason, but you should see the logical difficulty. Treason is a crime committed against the king. How can the king be guilty of treason against himself? How could he be guilty of violating his own law if he is the fountain of law—the author of law?

Parliament's solution was to charge the king with violating not statute law but a more fundamental unwritten law hinted at in his coronation oath: his responsibility to protect his subjects.

Whereas it is notorious that Charles Stuart, the now King of England, has had a wicked design totally to subvert the ancient and fundamental laws and liberties of this nation, and in their trade to introduce arbitrary and tyrannical government; and that he has prosecuted it with fire and sword, levied and maintained a cruel war in the land against the Parliament and kingdom, whereby the country hath been miserably wasted, the public treasure exhausted, trade decayed, thousands of people murdered, and infinite other mischiefs committed.

Put simply, the king was charged with committing treason not against himself, but against the interests of the people of England. This is a revolutionary idea: that a ruler's chief responsibility is not to God or himself, but to the people over whom he rules. Even more revolutionary is the idea

that if he fails in that duty, he can be held accountable by a court and a jury not of his peers, for a king has no peers, but of his subjects.

This in fact brings up a second problem facing the Parliament and the court. If the law was the king's law, then the courts were the king's courts. How could any court not summoned by the king be a real court? How could it try him? The king responded to the charges by first demanding to know by what authority this court sat. It was a perfect strategy. Parliament's response was that it sat "in the name and in behalf of the people of England." Remember the *Apology of the Commons* in Lecture Twenty-Eight when they said that Parliament sat in the interests of the commonwealth. Remember Coke saying, "We sit here for thousands and ten thousands."

If the king was ultimately responsible to the people, then it followed that Parliament could try the king on their behalf. Parliament has just forged a new answer to the problem of sovereignty and so to all the other problems facing England.

In fact, if you remember, the Rump isn't representative of the people of England. It's a rump of a fraction of a group that opposed the king. There was no way that they could claim that they represented the whole of popular opinion and the king knew this. Never during the course of his trial did he recognize the legality of the court or plead to the charge. He refused to cooperate.

That being the case, the verdict was a foregone conclusion. The sentence, given on 27 January, was death.

At this point, the king demanded to speak, but as with so much in his unfortunate reign, he was too late. The court refused to hear him. In the meantime, Oliver Cromwell used every means of persuasion at his disposal to secure 59 signers to the most notorious death warrant in English history. Imagine putting your name to this document. Cromwell said at the time, "I tell you I will cut off his head with the crown on it." There would be at least one signature on that warrant.



The king was taken to St. James Palace while a scaffold was built across the park at Whitehall. The night before his death—that is, the night of 29 January 1649—he burnt his papers, and he saw his youngest children for the last time. It's a very moving scene. He urged them to support their elder brother (also named Charles), who at the moment of his death would become King Charles II. He urged the younger children to support their brother and not to cooperate with Parliament—above all, not allow Parliament to make any one of them a constitutional puppet king.

Charles knew that he'd lost a battle, but he was in a larger fight. He was fighting for his immortal soul, and he was fighting for the monarchy. He was fighting to preserve all of its prerogatives. Remember, in the end, he repudiated the legislation of 1641, and he did not cooperate. He could have saved his life at any time in those negotiations in 1646–1649. He could have said, "I agree, I'll be a constitutional king." He didn't because he wanted to preserve the monarchy intact for his son. It's the one piece of real foresight he ever demonstrated.

Indeed, Charles I may not have known how to govern as a great king, but he proved over the next few hours that he knew how to die like one. On the morning of 30 January, he and his attendants took a great deal of time over his appearance. He asked about the weather. Told it was cold, he put on a second shirt. He didn't want anyone to see him shiver because they would attribute it to fear.

Finally, the parliamentary guard came and escorted him to Whitehall Palace as we described at the beginning of the lecture. After reaching Whitehall, he was made to wait some time, but then at 1:30 p.m., he was escorted through the Banqueting House. Remember, the Banqueting House was one of those buildings that his father had built that had increased the burden of taxation on the English people. He was walking under a painting by Peter Paul Rubens (it's still there; you can still go to the Banqueting House and see this) that depicts his father's ascent into heaven as the newly crowned Charles I looks on. Can you imagine what must have been going through his mind?

At the end of his walk was an open window facing west. Outside was built a scaffold draped in black, at the center of which was the block and beyond

which were railings. Beyond and below the railings at ground level were parliamentary soldiers, again in their red coats. Beyond them was a crowd of ordinary Londoners, the very people in whose name this act was about to be carried out.

The king emerged into the cold gray January light and asked to speak, but dogged with ill luck to the last, his voice failed to carry. Fortunately, the speech has survived in printed form. Had the crowd been able to hear it, they would have heard him make an argument that, “A subject and a sovereign are clean different things.” To kill the king was therefore to kill God’s authority and so to kill law and order in the state. Therefore, he, not Parliament, represented the true interests of his subjects. He was the martyr of the people.

Surely, no one could forget what happened next. I say that because he actually turned to Bishop Juxon who’d accompanied him on top of the scaffold, and said, “Remember.” To some extent, Juxon spent the rest of his life trying to figure out, “What about this could I possibly forget? What am I supposed to remember?”

The king then said to Juxon that his executioner sent him “from a corruptible to an incorruptible crown.” He then knelt, said a silent prayer, and extended his hands. This was the predetermined signal that he was ready. The axe fell and as was the custom of the times, the henchman then raised the severed head of the king for all to see. However, he did not say, “Behold the head of a traitor,” as portrayed in the movie *Cromwell*. He didn’t speak because that henchman did not want to be recognized.

It is said that at the instant when the blow was given, “There was such a deep universal groan amongst the thousands of people as I (the writer) never heard before and desire may never hear again.”

Well might they have groaned. For the first time in English history, the English people had judicially and publicly murdered their king. Such an action went against the Great Chain of Being and 1,000 years of sermons, ceremonies, traditions, and other propaganda. For 1,000 years, the English people had been taught that their king was virtually God on earth, that he

was the father of the nation, and that he was sacrosanct and inviolable like a Roman tribune. Now he and these habits of mind have all been violated.

Within weeks, the Rump Parliament would abolish the monarchy and the House of Lords. England was now, for the first and only time in its history, a republic. That does not mean that it was a democracy. The Civil Wars, the execution of the king, and the establishment of that republic had been worked out by—and in the interests of—a small group of landed gentry and urban oligarchs. Think of all the names I've dropped in this lecture: Oliver Cromwell, Bradshaw, Pym. These are all landed gentlemen. These people weren't fighting for democracy. They were fighting so that the gentry could rule England. I've mentioned the film *Cromwell*. One of the biggest mistakes purveyed in *Cromwell* is you have Oliver Cromwell marching up and down the country talking about democracy. He was going to give the people democracy. The real Oliver Cromwell hated the idea of democracy. He wanted no part of it.

The next question was would England now settle down? Would the English people in whose name the Civil Wars had been fought and the king executed now accept rule by the Rump and all these landed gentlemen as they'd once accepted rule by the Stuarts? Or would they demand that the revolution go farther and embrace such radical notions as democracy or religious toleration? On a deeper level, what did all of these events mean? Had the English people and their representatives committed a heinous act, murdering not only a king, but law and order and justice as well? Or had they taken the first step toward freedom from despotic rule?

As we'll see in the next lecture, that question was not settled by these events. Indeed, it would be debated for the next 50 years. There would be those who would say this was the terrible sin on the soul of the English people. There would be others who would cheer and say this was the moment that they broke their chains. We begin that debate and England's attempt to put some sort of constitutional arrangement back together in the next lecture.

# The Search for a Settlement: 1649–53

## Lecture 33

Since a republic was a new form of government in Europe, since the landed aristocracy had never ruled before without a king, and since the common people had never played so large a role in a successful revolution before, there followed a brief period of experimentation and relative political, social, and religious freedom. ... Most of these movements were rejected by the landed aristocracy who still ran the country, but their ideas would not be forgotten.

In January 1649, the ruling elite lopped off the highest link of the Great Chain of Being, leaving themselves on top. But they wanted the other links to stay intact. Within weeks of the king's execution, the Rump passed legislation establishing a Commonwealth (that is, a republic). Its executive was a Council of State, to be nominated by the legislature. Its legislature was the Rump Parliament.

But in order to achieve their revolution, the parliamentary gentry had turned to the common people, more specifically, the army. Would these people continue to be loyal to their social superiors now that they knew how to resist authority? Or would they want a piece of the pie, especially now that times were so bad? The war had killed about 180,000 people (3.6 percent of the population) and wrecked many local economies. The harvests of 1649–1651 were as bad as those of the 1590s. Plague and disease were rampant, inadvertently spread by the army itself. Moreover, as part of the revolution, the Rump swept away many of the instruments of social control, such as the Church courts and censorship. As a result, more than 20,000 pamphlets were published between 1642 and 1660. The writers of these pamphlets aired many radical ideas, most of which were hostile to the Great Chain of Being.

Discontent was especially strong in the army. As early as 1647, with the First Civil War won, Parliament sought to disband the army without pay. In response, the soldiers organized. Each regiment elected agitators to sit on the newly formed Council of the Army. This Council negotiated with the king for a new constitution, the Heads of the Proposals. The Council itself divided

into two groups. The Grandees, representing most of the officers, wanted the army to be paid but also wanted to maintain gentry control. The Levellers, led by Col. John Lilburn, who represented the men, wanted more from the revolution. The Leveller program embraced universal manhood suffrage, reform of the legal system, a welfare state for widows and orphans of the war—in general, what Lilburne called “the Sovereignty of the People.” In October 1647, the Grandees and the Levellers debated a constitution, to be submitted to the king, based on these proposals. But when the king raised troops for the Second Civil War, “the Leveller moment” came to an end. In the spring of 1649, the Rump suppressed the Levellers, executing many of their leaders.

The virtual abolition of the Church of England, the widespread printing of the Bible, and the end of the ecclesiastical courts and censorship of the press allowed radical new religious ideas to spread. Because neither diehard Anglicans nor Catholics sat in the Rump, there were two main approaches to religious policy in the Commonwealth. Presbyterians wanted a State Church run along the lines of the Scottish Kirk, with individual congregations subordinate to a national General Assembly. This conservative, hierarchical option was favored by most parliamentary landed gentry. Independents wanted a looser national church in which individual congregations could decide matters of worship, choose their clergyman, and so on. In effect, they wanted a toleration of all Protestant belief. This radical and democratic option led to a series of interesting—to the ruling class, alarming—religious sects:

- Baptists believed that baptism, and the choice of faith it implied, should be delayed until adulthood. This belief was controversial because it implied freedom of choice in religion and lots of unbaptized young people.
- The Seekers went from congregation to congregation seeking a permanent home.
- The Diggers believed that the Bible did not sanction private property. They established early communes in which all property

was held in common. This idea was not popular with the landed gentry.

- The Ranters believed that to the pure, all things were pure, that nothing was a sin unless one conceived it to be a sin. This was thought to give them the excuse to party, party, party. Everyone else condemned the Ranters.
- The Quakers believed that all people contained God's inner light in equal measure. This meant that women were as good as men; a commoner, as good as a lord. Quakers refused to swear oaths, tip their caps, give the wall, or otherwise demonstrate deference to their social superiors. Possessed by their inner light, they quaked, ranted, and preached in ways that most English people found disturbing. In short, the Quakers rejected totally the Great Chain of Being.
- The Fifth Monarchy Men believed that the Bible had foretold five great monarchies on earth. Given that four had already fallen (Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome) and the fifth was to be that of King Jesus, they believed that the Commonwealth was only an interim arrangement, that Christ's Second Coming was imminent, and that the best way to prepare for it would be to impose Mosaic Law on the country.

Members of the English aristocracy were so horrified by the Levellers and the sects that they began to think better of their little experiment with freedom of speech and religious toleration.

The Rump ruled England from 1649 to 1653. In the end, it was too radical for conservative country gentlemen and too conservative for radical Independents and Levellers. Above all, it never solved the problem of the army. On the one hand, the army was the Rump's only major source of support. On the other, the army was a force the Rump feared because it could not be controlled. Moreover, the army was expensive to pay, necessitating high taxes, which made the Rump unpopular. The Rump's temporary solution to the problem was to send the army to Ireland.

Cromwell arrived in Ireland thirsting for revenge against the rebels of 1641. His orders were to stop the Old English and Gaelic Confederates from mounting an expedition to restore the Stuarts in England. He took the island back town by town, putting the inhabitants of Drogheda and Wexford to the sword when they refused to surrender. (It is worth emphasizing that the defenders of Drogheda and Wexford were Old English, whereas the perpetrators of the atrocities of 1641 were Gaelic. Cromwell did not make this distinction.) He then launched a scorched-earth campaign, burning the crops, which led to the deaths of perhaps 600,000 people in a total population of 1,400,000! After three more years of fighting, an additional 40,000 Catholic landowners were evicted from their homes and forced to move to Connaught. In 1641, Catholics owned 60 percent of the land in Ireland. By 1660, they owned 20 percent.

**Cromwell arrived  
in Ireland thirsting  
for revenge against  
the rebels of 1641.**

In 1650, the Scots acknowledged Prince Charles, eldest son of the late king, as King Charles II. In return, Charles pledged to establish Presbyterianism in England. Cromwell defeated the Covenanters at Dunbar in September 1650 and again, a year later, at Worcester. On the later occasion, the prince was forced to hide in a tree (the Royal Oak) and make his way to the Continent in disguise.

The Commonwealth had some domestic successes as well. In 1650–1651, the Rump passed the Navigation Acts, forbidding foreign powers from trading with England’s American colonies and requiring such trade to be carried in English ships. This became the basis for a financial empire. It pursued reforms in the central administration, the law, and the Poor Law, but these ended by offending government officials and lawyers. In 1653, the army finally lost patience with the Rump because it seemed to be dragging its feet on reform. Cromwell marched to the House of Commons and dissolved the Rump angrily. In the end, the ruling class of England was not ready for reform, let alone democracy and religious toleration. Over the next few years, these men would seek stability instead. ■

## Suggested Reading

Bucholz and Key, *Early Modern England*, chap. 8, secs. 3–4

Coward, *Stuart Age*, chap. 7.

Kishlansky, *Monarchy Transformed*, chap. 8.

## Questions to Consider

1. Why did the members of the Rump Parliament want to disband the army that had won them the war? Why did the English aristocracy come to view standing armies as dangerous?
2. How can we explain the variety of unorthodox ideas about government and religion that appeared in the 1640s? Do you suppose that these ideas were already latent in the general population or that they were a product of the times?



# The Search for a Settlement: 1649–53

## Lecture 33—Transcript

As we saw in the last lecture, the Bishops' Wars, Irish Rebellion, and the First and Second English Civil Wars culminated on a gray January day in 1649 when the Rump Parliament, acting in the name of the people of England, executed King Charles I on a charge of treason against that very people.

That event may have been a climax, but it was certainly not an end. In its wake, the Rump established the first republic in English history, the Commonwealth, vesting its power in themselves. Since a republic was a new form of government in Europe, since the landed aristocracy had never ruled before without a king, and since the common people had never played so large a role in a successful revolution before, there followed a brief period of experimentation and relative political, social, and religious freedom.

This lecture focuses on that unique moment in English history and the various radical groups that “came out of the woodwork” when King Charles was killed, in particular the Levellers, who wanted universal manhood suffrage, and various religious sects who took advantage of the religious toleration that ensued. Most of these movements were rejected by the landed aristocracy who still ran the country, but their ideas would not be forgotten.

The English Revolution of 1649 was intended by its framers to establish the sovereignty of the landed aristocracy. Put another way, the ruling elite, having lopped off the top of the Great Chain of Being, wanted the rest of the Chain to remain intact, with themselves of course at the top.

Within weeks of the king's execution, the Rump passed legislation establishing a Commonwealth—that is, a republic. Its executive would be a Council of State, to be nominated by the legislature. Its legislature would be the Rump Parliament. This should have been an aristocratic paradise: ruled by the upper 2 percent, the other 98 percent would stay loyal, and taxes would be low. But, like Henry VIII throwing a man down from a high tower and bidding him stop halfway down—like Henry VIII wanting the Reformation to go only so far, but not continue—the framers of the English Revolution now wanted the Revolution to stop. Would it?

Remember that in order to achieve their revolution, the parliamentary gentry had been forced to do something unprecedented. They'd called on the help of the common people, in particular the New Model Army. Would these people continue to obey their landlords and their social superiors now that those superiors had made them partners in a revolution and shown them how to resist authority? Or would they now want a piece of the pie, especially now that times are so bad?

The war had killed about 180,000 people. The harvests of 1649–1651 were as bad as those of the 1590s. Plague and disease were rampant, inadvertently and somewhat ironically spread by the very army that had been called into existence to defend the people's rights.

Moreover, as we've seen, even before the war began, Parliament had swept away many of the instruments of social control that would have made it easier to keep the 98 percent down, such as Church courts and censorship. As a result, during the war, publication flourished. Newspapers appeared for the first time in England. Most were one-sheet, one-issue wonders, but some published many issues before the war ended.

Over 20,000 pamphlets—political and religious—were published between 1642 and 1660. That's probably just the tip of the iceberg. That's the size of a famous pamphlet collection in the British Library, collected by George Thomason. There may have been many more.

In short, ordinary people were no longer dependent upon the parish priest for news or for instruction on how the world ought to go. Some of this work was pretty traditional. For example, right after his death, a work called *Eikon Basilike* appeared that purported to be the last thoughts of Charles I. It was an immediate runaway bestseller. It may be credited with beginning the creation of a cult of the “royal martyr.” We'll come back to that cult in later lectures.

Other pamphlets would air radical ideas hostile to the Great Chain of Being. For example, John Milton would publish a ringing defense of free speech, the *Areopagitica*, in 1644. I'll quote from other examples of radical literature in this lecture.

In 1646, the Presbyterian Thomas Edwards complained about all this in a work called *Gangrena*. It stated that these radical works were poisoning the health of the English state. They were seducing the people into radical philosophies and lifestyles. In fact, he was right. This new freedom made it possible for ordinary people for the first time to question what they'd been told for 1,000 years, and even to try to put their new answers into practice.

It was only natural that having helped to decapitate a centuries-old hierarchical structure, they would question why they should remain at the bottom. Put simply, the common farmers and the ordinary tradesmen who helped make this revolution now wanted a piece of the pie. To use a contemporary metaphor, having unseated one rider, they did not want to put another one on their backs.

This process began in the army. To use Edwards's metaphor, the army was spreading a disease that was non-physical. As early as the summer of 1647 (please understand that to illustrate the radicalism of the army, I am now moving back in time and have revived King Charles—he's alive again), with the First Civil War barely won, Parliament had actually tried to get rid of the army without paying them. The idea was to demobilize some of them, and send the rest to fight Catholics in the bogs of Ireland.

Needless to say, the soldiers took a rather dim view of this. They felt unpaid and unloved by the cause they'd fought for, so they began to organize, politicize, and radicalize. In June 1647, the army declared that it was, "No mere mercenary army fighting for pay." It fought, "In defense of our own and the people's just rights and liberties." They would not disband, "until their grievances were heard and settled."

In other words, the army is now claiming to represent the national interest, not Parliament. The army would decide where the revolution stopped. Take a moment: Does this language sound familiar? Do you remember when Parliament used to use this language in the *Apology of the Commons*, for example, against the king? Do you remember me pointing out the worry that the ruling class had taught the common people how to question authority? Here's your proof.

Each regiment elected an agitator to sit on the newly formed Council of the Army. This was democracy in action. This Council then tried to negotiate with the king directly (remember we've gone back to 1647) for a new constitution. In the course of those negotiations, the army and its Council divided into two groups. On the one hand were the Grandees. These represented most of the officers. They wanted the army to be paid, but they also wanted to maintain gentry control. On the other hand were the Levellers, led by Colonel John Lilburne. They represented the rank and file. They wanted more.

The Levellers demanded universal manhood suffrage. Some Levellers wanted votes for women as well. They wanted reform of the legal system. They wanted the courts to use plain simple English. They wanted speedy trials by juries. They wanted equality for all under the law. They wanted a welfare state for widows and orphans of the war. Lilburne summed this program up in a ringing phrase: "the Sovereignty of the People."

In October 1647, the Grandees and the Levellers held a debate at Putney Church (just outside of London) on the proposed new constitution. The new constitution would be based on the above principles, and it would be called the "Agreement of the People." It would be submitted to the king if it passed debate.

Many people spoke in the debate. Colonel Henry Ireton, Cromwell's son-in-law, I think best advanced the cause of the Grandee position. He argued that the army had gone to war to fight the king to restore the ancient constitution, not to change it. Therefore, the time-honored property qualification—remember that in order to vote for a member of Parliament, you had to own 40 shillings worth of land (that's £2 worth of land)—ought to remain. According to Ireton, the franchise should always reside with those "with a permanent fixed interest in the kingdom, that is, the persons in whom all land lies and in those corporations in whom all trading lies."

We've seen this argument before. It's the idea that the only people who should have a say in the state are people with property, although you'll notice that Ireton is a man of his times: He lets the merchants in. Before it

would have been landed property, but by the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the merchants are becoming more important.

In response, a hitherto little known officer—in fact, we don't know anything about this guy—Colonel Thomas Rainsborough set forth the Leveller position that, “The poorest he that is in England hath a life to live as the greatest he.” His corollary was that, “Every man that is to live under a government ought first by his own consent to put himself under that government.” Here with eloquent simplicity, the common man stands up and demands to be a part of the political process irrespective of birth, wealth, land, or power.

Rainsborough's rationale isn't based upon God's law or Common Law, it's based on natural law. Later in the century, John Locke would take up this particular cause, and he would elaborate on these arguments, but notice that it was already there in the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. People were already starting to think in these terms.

In the end, the Putney debates proved inconclusive. Within a short time, as you will recall, the king broke off negotiations, escaped from the army, contracted with the Scots for an army, and started the Second Civil War. So ended the Leveller moment: The army had to go back to fighting the king.

The debates remain a monument, however, to the political consciousness of ordinary people. It proves that people really were thinking outside of the box as early as 1647.

In the spring of 1649, the Rump, which was no more sympathetic to Leveller ideas than the king was, suppressed a second round of agitation, executed many of the Leveller leaders, and sent the army to Ireland. Lilburne was convinced that their ideas would live on: “Posterity shall reap the benefit of our endeavors whatever shall become of us.” Clearly, the revolution had opened a Pandora's box of new ideas. You can imagine what the English ruling class thought of this.

They would find no consolation in religion. The new freedom of speech and thought that we've talked about in England also allowed radical religious ideas to spread. In particular, when the Church of England was abolished,

the widespread printing of the Bible, the ending of the ecclesiastical courts, and the end of censorship of the press all led to religious experimentation. Remember that the English people had only gotten the Bible in the previous century. Now they could expound on it. Now every person could read a Bible and sit in a tavern or go into a pulpit and say what he, or even in some cases she, thought the Bible said.

The result would of course be a kind of religious chaos. Apart from diehard Anglicans and Catholics, neither of whom sat in the room, there were two main approaches to religion under the Commonwealth (I'm mainly talking about within Parliament). There were English Presbyterians. They wanted a State Church run along the lines of the Scottish Kirk. They wanted individual congregations subordinate to a national General Assembly. This was the conservative hierarchical option. It would have been favored probably by many Grandees and by most parliamentary gentry.

But it was never effectively enforced. It couldn't be, because remember that Parliament had done away with a lot of the means of coercion—a lot of the means to make people behave, go to church, and think the same thing. In part, one reason for this was that there was another group in Parliament, the Independents, who in 1650 secured repeal of all the statutes that compelled people to attend the State Church.

The Independents wanted a looser national church in which individual congregations would decide matters of worship, choose their own clergymen, etc. This would mean, in effect, toleration of all Protestant belief. This was obviously the more radical and democratic option, and it gave birth to a series of interesting—but to the ruling class, alarming—religious sects. Everybody's reading their Bible, and now all sorts of different ideas and different groups come out of the woodwork.

Some of these groups will be familiar to you. For example, the Baptists, or, as they were sometimes referred to, the “Dippers,” were descended from German Anabaptists in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. They believed that baptism and the choice of faith it implied should be delayed until adulthood when one could make a rational choice. This seems eminently reasonable, but in the context of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, it frightened people. This would have meant lots of

unbaptized children and young people running around. Of course, freedom of choice in religion means that there would no longer be a State Church. How could you have a State Church—at least one that compelled unity—if you couldn't force people to abide by it?

Then, there were the Seekers. The Seekers took this idea one step further. They went around from congregation to congregation seeking a permanent home—seeking truth. This was a group you didn't stay in for very long.

More alarming still were the Diggers led by Gerard Winstanley. The Diggers had read their Bible and come to the conclusion that God doesn't sanction private property. Jesus wants us all to share our property in common. You can imagine how much the English ruling class liked this one. This may explain why the early Digger communes, most prominently one at St. George's Hill, Surrey, were not well received by their neighbors. They also experienced bad weather and pretty much went under.

Then, even scarier, were the Ranters. The Ranters sought a revolution not in politics or property, but of the spirit. They believed, in the words of their leader, Abiezer Coppe, "To the pure, all things are pure." That means that for Ranters, individual conscience—not the Bible, nor the church hierarchy—should tell you what to do. As Laurence Clarkson put it:

Sin hath its conception only in the imagination. There is no such act as drunkenness, adultery, and theft in God. What act so ever is done by thee in light and love is light and lovely, though it be that act called adultery. No matter what Scripture, saints, or churches say, if that within thee do not condemn thee, thou shalt not be condemned.

Contemporaries heard this, and they assumed that this just gave Ranters an excuse to party, party, party aided and abetted by those three liberators of the soul—alcohol, tobacco, and sex. Everybody condemned the Ranters. This led the Rump to pass acts against blasphemy and adultery.

They were just as disparaging of the Quakers. The Quakers were led by George Fox. They believed that all people contained God's inner light—that is the Holy Spirit or Spirit of Christ—in equal measure. Can you understand

that this is dynamite? This inner light was to be obeyed, since it was God's inner light, over the dictates of the State, the Church, and even Scripture. Since everyone possessed the inner light in equal measure, a peasant was as good as a lord, or a woman as good as a man.

Quakers refused to acknowledge earthly authorities like the State, the Church, and the courts. Rather, they publicly stressed God's impending vengeance on "the great ones of the earth." Thus, they refused to swear oaths, tip their caps, give the wall, or demonstrate deference to their social superiors in any way. They often gave into their inner light, quaking and ranting and preaching in ways that most English people found very disturbing. Some went about naked as a sign. Others shouted down rival preachers, and always women played an important role in their services, even going out into the world to preach and testify.

In short, the Quakers rejected the Great Chain of Being almost entirely.

In 1656, James Naylor, one of the founders of the Quaker movement, actually reenacted Christ's entry into Jerusalem by riding through the streets of Bristol on an ass. He clearly meant his performance to symbolize Christ's presence in all human beings, but that's not how Parliament saw it. They saw this act as a horrid blasphemy and a sign of growing disorder. They decreed that Naylor be pilloried in London, "Whipped through the streets of Bristol, his tongue pierced with a hot iron, his forehead branded with a 'B' for blasphemmer, and finally put to death." He was saved from the last fate by Oliver Cromwell's mercy, but this reaction against Naylor should tell you something. The ruling elite was really afraid of Quakers.

It should tell you something else. You will note a strong millenarian streak in these sects. That is, many of them seemed to believe that the last days were upon England. And why not? The English had just killed a king. All the old structures of government and religion were falling apart. People were living through turbulent times, and they needed answers. They had the Bible, and they found those answers in the Book of Revelation. In other words, there's a tremendous sense that the world is coming to an end and that the second coming of Christ is imminent.



Take the Muggletonians. The Muggletonians believed that Lodowick Muggleton, a tailor from the West Country who had experienced a series of religious visions, was the last prophet named in the Book of Revelation. Muggletonians believed that their prophet had the power to save or damn on the spot, which Lodowick did when he wasn't imprisoned in the 1650s.

But the most disturbing group of all was the Fifth Monarchy Men. They believed that the Bible had foretold in the Book of Daniel five great monarchies on earth. Count off: Four had already fallen—Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome. Since the fifth was undoubtedly going to be the kingdom of King Jesus, they believed that the government of the Commonwealth was only an interim arrangement, that Christ's Second Coming was imminent, and that the best way to prepare for it would be to impose Mosaic Law on the country.

Some were prepared to go farther and usher in the Second Coming by force. In other words, these people believed that since there were five monarchies predicted—four had taken place, and the fifth wasn't here yet—to obey the State was actually a sin. Do you remember when religion used to be a bulwark of the State? Now it seemed to counsel disobedience.

Something should be obvious to you by now from this discussion. First, religious toleration and a free press had produced religious diversity, or to contemporary eyes, chaos, just as Queen Elizabeth and the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church had predicted.

Second, the ruling elite was horrified by the sects, and so began to think better of their little experiment with religious toleration and freedom of speech. That reconsideration would doom the Rump.

The Rump Parliament ruled England from 1649–1653. In the end, it was too radical for conservative country gentlemen and too conservative for radical Independents and Levellers. Above all, it never solved the problem of the army. The problem of the army goes something like this. On the one hand, the Rump was terribly unpopular, in part because taxes were so high. Taxes were so high because the Rump had to pay for the army. The Rump could have become popular if it could have gotten rid of the army and lowered

taxes, but it could only get rid of the army by paying them off completely, and that would mean raising taxes. If they got rid of the army, they would be getting rid of the one group in England that supported the Rump. You see, it's boxes within boxes and wheels within wheels.

In the end, the only thing the Rump could think of doing was to send the army to Ireland after the king's death in the spring of 1649. There, Cromwell's orders were to stop the Old English and the Gaelic confederates under James Butler, Duke of Ormond, from mounting an expedition to restore the Stuarts. There was a fear that the Irish rebels would come and restore the Stuarts, but Cromwell had a more personal agenda. He arrived in Ireland thirsting for revenge against the rebels of 1641.

He took the island back town by town, putting the inhabitants of Drogheda and Wexford to the sword when they refused to surrender. In the first case, his troops did so on their generals' orders. In the second case, they simply ran amuck with sectarian hatred. Cromwell shared that hatred. He wrote back to Parliament, "I am persuaded that this is a righteous judgment of God upon these barbarous wretches who have imbrued their hands in so much innocent blood." What he's saying is that the Catholic Irish deserve this because of the Rebellion of 1641. What he's missing is that the rebels of 1641 were Gaelic Irish, and he's just massacred Old English. It's fairly typical of an English commander not to waste time over the subtleties of the Irish situation.

Just to make sure that the Irish—Gaelic, Old English, whomever—got the message, the following year Cromwell's troops launched a scorched-earth campaign, burning the crops and leading to the deaths of perhaps 600,000 people in a nation of 1,400,000! It's an astounding statistic.

After three more years of fighting, an additional 40,000 Catholic landowners were evicted from their homes and forced to move to Connaught. Let me give you a statistic. In 1641, after Strafford's plantations and James I's plantations, Catholics still owned 60 percent of the land in Ireland, but by 1660, after Cromwell, they owned 20 percent.

Having subdued the Irish, Cromwell now turned his attentions to the Scots. In 1650, the Scots, horrified at the execution of Charles I, acknowledged

Prince Charles, the eldest son of the late king, as King Charles II. In return, Charles agreed to the Covenant, which means that Charles II promised to impose Presbyterianism on England. There the Scots Presbyterians go again. This is their one goal.

Once again, Cromwell and the New Model Army have to remind everybody who won the Civil Wars. Cromwell was in fact far more reluctant to kill Scots Protestants than Irish Catholics, so he remonstrated with the Covenanters. He wrote, “I beseech you in the bowels of Christ, think it possible you may be mistaken.”

When they refused to reconsider, he defeated the Covenanters at Dunbar in Scotland on 3 September 1650. A year later to the very day, he defeated a Royalist Presbyterian army under Charles II himself at Worcester. The whole of the British Isles was now more firmly under London’s control than ever before.

After Worcester, poor Prince Charles was forced to hide in a tree, which would be forever after commemorated in British pub songs as “the Royal Oak.” Over the next six weeks, he had to make his way to the continent in disguise. He was assisted in this by Catholic families, in particular, a Catholic priest named Father Huddleston, who we’ll meet again in a later lecture.

For the next 10 years, Charles would dine out on the stories of his escape and survive on the handouts and hospitality of a variety of European rulers. He kept a shabby, small, peripatetic court populated by Royalist exiles and hangers on, all of whom hoped and plotted constantly for a restoration, which of course would mean that their ship had come in. These plots were all doomed to failure, partly because there was little will to restore the Stuarts. The other European monarchs weren’t terribly interested, and the English people weren’t terribly interested, at least not yet. In addition, the Commonwealth had thoroughly infiltrated the court with spies. Charles was being spied upon, and Oliver Cromwell knew everything that was going on.

These military successes should have bolstered the prestige of the Rump. There were domestic successes as well, urged on by Cromwell. He

told the Rump Parliament, “Relieve the oppressed, hear the groans of the poor prisoners, be pleased to reform the abuses of the professions, and if there be any that makes many poor to make a few rich, that suits not a Commonwealth.”

The Rump tried to do all these things. In 1650–1651, it sought to improve trade by passing the Navigation Acts. The Navigation Acts are crucial in English history. They forbade foreign powers from trading with England’s American colonies. They also required that that trade be carried in English ships. This is a way of building up the English merchant marine and also trade with the colonies. These laws would eventually become the foundation of a financial empire, but for the moment all they succeeded in doing was provoking a trade war with the Dutch, the first Anglo-Dutch War, that England could ill-afford to fight. The Dutch were angry because they wanted to trade with the English American colonies.

This war will be addressed in the next lecture. For now, you need to know that the Commonwealth just didn’t need the problem.

The Rump also pursued reforms in the central administration, the law, and the Poor Law, but these ended up offending government officials and lawyers. As we’ve seen, the Rump’s tolerant religious policy produced chaos that the ruling elite could not abide. In 1653, the army finally lost its patience with the Rump. What was happening was that the Rump was supposed to be having debates to decide how to dissolve itself and create a fairer franchise. In the end, it seemed to be dragging its feet. Finally, Cromwell marched to the House of Commons and dissolved them angrily. We have an eyewitness account and by now you know it’s always worth quoting Oliver Cromwell:

“He told the House that they had sat long enough and that some of them were whoremasters, that others of them were drunkards, and some corrupt and unjust men and scandalous to the profession of the gospel, and that it was not fit that they should sit as a Parliament any longer.” The Rump left quietly and unlamented. As Cromwell himself later wrote, “When they were dissolved, there was not so much as the barking of a dog.” So ended England’s first experiment with a republic.

In the end, what this lecture has proven is that the aristocratic rulers of England were not ready for reform, let alone democracy and religious toleration. Like Henry VIII, they'd opened a box and invited criticism of the king and all of these new ideas, but now they wanted to close the box. They wanted that criticism to stop because now it was potentially being directed at all of those landowners who owned all of that land, but didn't necessarily give people a vote or much say in the State.

Having created a professional army from out of the common people to defend their political rights against the king, the ruling elite was not shocked when those people demanded a share in those rights. Having demolished the Church of England, which they had found so oppressive, particularly under Archbishop Laud, and having abolished censorship to get their message of rebellion against the king out, they (the ruling elite) now found that the ordinary people came up with their own radical ideas about how God wanted men and women to order their lives and society.

Having found freedom not to their taste, the ruling elite of England would now seek stability, but where would they find it? Eventually, after another brief experiment we'll talk about in the next lecture, they landed on the one man who seemed to make everybody behave. They landed on the one man who had brought Ireland and Scotland to heel. In the next lecture, the rule of Oliver Cromwell.

# Cromwellian England: 1653–60

## Lecture 34

**Oliver Cromwell would be offered the Crown of England in 1658. He'd reject it. He was, in any case, more powerful than any previous King of England, because he had a professional standing army to enforce his will. Is it any wonder that his former friends—the Radicals and Independents—now felt that Cromwell betrayed them?**

**T**he dissolution of the Rump in 1653 gave religious Independents (that is, extreme Puritans) one last chance to set up “the new Jerusalem.” They proposed a “Parliament of Saints” elected by local congregations. This body came to be known as the “Barebones Parliament” after “Praise-God” Barebone, a London leather-seller and preacher who was also a member. As this name implies, the Barebones Parliament had a high proportion of religious radicals, many of whom had ambitious plans but little experience in politics.

Partially as a result, the Barebones Parliament achieved little. Some of its proposed legislation was impractical: for example, replacing English Common Law with Mosaic Law. Much of its legislation was enlightened, such as new procedures for births, marriages, probate of wills, relief of debtors, and the treatment of lunatics. Some of this enlightened legislation offended key interest groups. The attempt to abolish the Court of Chancery offended lawyers. The attempt to end lay patronage of church livings and appropriation of tithes offended landowners who did the appointing and appropriating. The attempt to end the collection of the excise and monthly assessments offended the army, which was paid out of them. Cromwell and the army dissolved the Barebones Parliament out of disgust within the year.

On 12 December 1653, a delegation of the army presented to General Cromwell the “Instrument of Government.” The Instrument of Government was the first (and so far only) written constitution in English history. It named Oliver Cromwell executive, giving him the title “Lord Protector.” The Protector was to be advised by a Council of State, filled by generals and his nominees. The Council would share control of the state’s finances

and armed forces. Legislation was to be made by a Parliament elected every three years by those with estates worth over £200 a year. This was a far stiffer qualification than under the old constitution. In many respects, the Instrument of Government represents a return to the old, stable, hierarchical system of monarchy, with a king in all but name. In fact, Cromwell would be offered the crown in 1658, only to refuse it. He was, in any case, more powerful than any previous King of England, because he had a professional standing army to enforce his will.

Oliver Cromwell had dominated English politics for a decade. He was born in 1599, an obscure gentleman from Huntingdonshire. He was educated at Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, a hotbed of Puritanism. During the war, he had proved a brilliant military tactician and born leader of men. Like Charles I, he was utterly convinced that God's purposes worked through him.

Cromwell's domestic policy was rational and successful. The Protectorate provided efficient government with a minimum of corruption. It pursued legal reform and sought to make education more widely available. It enforced religious toleration: Individual Puritan congregations were allowed to worship as they saw fit. Anglicans and Catholics were mostly left alone. In 1655, Jews were allowed back into England for the first time since 1290. Cromwell's foreign policy was aggressive and was also successful. The Navigation Acts provoked trade wars with the Dutch and the Spanish, but England won the first and drew the second. This led to the acquisition of more colonies, including sugar-rich Jamaica. The navy also protected trade in the Mediterranean from the Barbary pirates.

Unfortunately, such successes came at a price in freedom and money. In 1655, after an unsuccessful Royalist revolt, Cromwell divided the country into 12 military districts, each run by a major-general. The major-generals were to keep an eye on Royalists and Presbyterians and suppress rebellion and riot, blasphemy and swearing, drunkenness and gambling, fornication and adultery, indecent fashions, and even Christmas celebrations. In the end, the major-generals did much to confirm the Puritan reputation as kill-joys and the association of armies with tyranny. All of this good government cost far more money than had the smaller, less efficient administration of the



**A statue of Oliver Cromwell stands outside the House of Parliament in London. Cromwell dominated English politics for a decade.**

Stuarts: The cost of maintaining a standing army and effective navy raised total government expenditures to over £2 million a year. This necessitated continuance of the excise, high monthly assessments, and the sequestration and sale of Royalist lands.

Thus, by the time Oliver Cromwell died at the end of 1658, many English men and women began to yearn for the good old days of “Merrie Olde England” under the Stuarts. In particular, the old ruling elite resented the tax burden and their replacement by Puritan non-entities in positions of national and local power. Still, the restoration of the Stuarts was not inevitable. A man of Cromwell’s strength and conviction might have made the Protectorate work. At his death, the nation sought those qualities in his son, Richard.

Richard Cromwell was an intelligent, amiable man who lacked his father’s military reputation, charisma, and determination. He inherited a regime that was financially exhausted and increasingly unpopular. Above all, he failed to either win over or subdue the army. The army deposed him in favor of a



restored Rump in the spring of 1659. Having been ousted from, then returned to, power by the army, the Rump naturally sought to assert its control over that force. In response, the army again sent it packing on 13 October 1659. By now, order was breaking down all over England.

At about this time, General George Monck, leading the last fully paid army in the British Isles, began to march south from Scotland. No one knew what he would do. All sides (Independents, Presbyterians, Royalists) hoped that he would favor their position. Monck reached London in February 1660. After some vacillation, he ordered the Rump to call back all the members of the Long Parliament so that they could dissolve themselves and make way for new elections. Londoners celebrated by roasting rump steaks in the streets. These actions made the return of the king inevitable.

That spring, a new Parliament was elected. The Convention Parliament (so called because it convened itself) was dominated by Royalists and Presbyterians (the most moderate and conservative of Parliamentarians) who wanted the restoration of the monarchy. In the meantime, Prince Charles issued the Declaration of Breda, promising amnesty to all participants in the Civil Wars, except those to be omitted by Parliament; religious toleration; and recognition of all land sales since 1642. In short, Charles sought to placate any fears that he wanted revenge or to turn the clock back to his father's reign.

Later that spring, the Convention Parliament issued an invitation and dispatched a fleet to convey Charles II back to his ancestral kingdom. He landed, to wild rejoicing, on his birthday, 29 May 1660. To judge from this reception, many English men—and perhaps even more women—were in love with their new sovereign. Both he and they bent over backwards to prove that all was forgiven, that the British Civil Wars had never happened. But they had happened. Could the English people go home again? Could the

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**[Monck] ordered the Rump to call back all the members of the Long Parliament so that they could dissolve themselves and make way for new elections. ... These actions made the return of the king inevitable.**

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Great Chain of Being be put back together? If so, what was the meaning of the Civil Wars? Had they solved the long-term tensions left over from the Tudors? If not, what then? The next few years would reveal the answers to these questions. ■

### Suggested Reading

Bucholz and Key, *Early Modern England*, chap. 8, secs. 4–5.

Coward, *Stuart Age*, chap. 7.

Kishlansky, *Monarchy Transformed*, chap. 8.

### Questions to Consider

1. Given the Protectorate's many successes, why did it collapse so soon after Cromwell's death?
2. Who, in the end, won the British Civil Wars? What could each side claim? Did the wars settle the long-term problems that had produced them?

# **Cromwellian England: 1653–60**

## **Lecture 34—Transcript**

By 1653, after having experienced the political demands of the Levellers and the religious rantings of the sects, the ruling elite of England had just about had enough with revolution.

In the last lecture, we saw that the public execution of the king had opened the English people to notions of democracy and religious toleration that explicitly rejected the old certainties of the Great Chain of Being. This was certainly not what the ruling elite had in mind when they took up arms against Charles I.

In 1653, one of their numbers, Oliver Cromwell, dissolved the Rump Parliament and England's republican government. The country began to move back toward something more traditional.

Eventually, after a brief experiment with a "Parliament of Saints," the landed classes and the army would ask Oliver Cromwell to administer England as Lord Protector. As we'll see, the Cromwellian regime was efficient, giving England really good government, it could be argued, for the first time in its history. It also pursued an effective domestic and foreign policy.

But the Protectorate was also expensive and repressive in the eyes of many conservative aristocrats, both Presbyterian and Anglican-Royalist. Following the death of Cromwell in 1658, both the Protectorate and the stability that it had guaranteed would collapse. This led to a crisis of authority and a series of delicate negotiations that would eventually result in the restoration of the Stuart monarchy in 1660. That possibility, however, seemed quite remote in 1653.

The dissolution of the Rump in 1653 gave religious independence—that is, extreme Puritans in the army—one last chance to set up "the New Jerusalem." They proposed a "Parliament of Saints," elected by local congregations. This body came to be known as the "Barebones Parliament" after "Praise-God" Barebone, a London leather-seller and preacher who was also a member.

As the name implies, Barebones Parliament had a high proportion of religious radicals, mainly Baptists and even Fifth Monarchy Men. These people were long on ambitious plans and short on political experience and realism. Partially as a result, the Barebones Parliament achieved little. Some of its proposed legislation was impractical and wild. They actually seriously considered replacing English Common Law with Mosaic Law. This would have meant, among other things, stoning for adultery.

Some of its legislation was enlightened: new civil procedures for registering births, marriages, and deaths; probate of wills; relief of debtors; and treatment of lunatics. But some of this enlightened legislation offended key interest groups. An attempt to abolish the fairly corrupt Court of Chancery offended lawyers. An attempt to end the lay patronage of church livings and the appropriation of tithes (that stranglehold that landlords had on the local church) offended landowners. An attempt to end the collection of the excise and the monthly assessments—these very high taxes that existed to pay for the army—was, of course, resented by the army.

Cromwell complained that where before he had to deal with knaves, now he had to deal with fools. The godly reformer in him had welcomed the Parliament of Saints initially, but the hardheaded country gentleman realized that what the country needed now was prudence and competence, not flights of religious fancy.

He got his allies in the Barebones Parliament to vote a dissolution while most of its members were away at a prayer meeting. It should be obvious that Oliver Cromwell was by now the most important man in England. Without his support, no government could function.

On 12 December 1653, a delegation of the army presented to General Cromwell the “Instrument of Government.” Once he accepted it, the Instrument of Government became the first, and so far the only, written constitution in English history. It named Oliver Cromwell executive, giving him the title “Lord Protector.” The Protector was to be advised by a Council of State, filled by generals and his nominees. The Council would share control of the state’s finances and the armed forces.

Legislation was to be made by a Parliament. That Parliament was to be elected every three years by those whose estates were worth over £200 a year. Do you remember that the old property qualification was £2 a year? This is far stiffer. Here's another sign that the ruling elite is pulling away from this idea of democracy and letting the people have a say. In fact, they've just thrown a whole lot of voters off of the rolls.

In many respects, it should be obvious that the Instrument of Government represents a return to the old, stable, hierarchical system of monarchy, with Parliament, Privy Council, and king in all but name. In fact, Oliver Cromwell would be offered the Crown of England in 1658. He'd reject it. He was, in any case, more powerful than any previous King of England, because he had a professional standing army to enforce his will.

Is it any wonder that his former friends—the Radicals and Independents—now felt that Cromwell betrayed them? One Fifth Monarchist went up to him and said to his face that he, “took the crown from off the head of Christ and put it on his own.” Or is it any wonder that the ruling elite (parliamentary Presbyterians and even old Royalists) found that they didn't mind the new regime quite so much—certainly not as much as they minded the Rump.

Oliver Cromwell had dominated English politics for a decade. I've delayed until now, his supreme moment, to ask who was this man whom one biographer has characterized as “God's Englishman?” He himself said that he was, “By birth, a gentleman living neither in any considerable height nor yet in obscurity.” Specifically, he was born in 1599 a gentleman from Huntingdonshire, which is a little town very close to Cambridge. His estate was worth about £200 a year, so he just barely would have had a vote under his own constitution.

He was distantly related to Henry VIII's great minister Thomas Cromwell through the latter's sister. He was educated at Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, which was at the time a hotbed of Puritanism. Before the war, like many Puritans, he had experienced a personal conviction of his great sinfulness, but then again, like so many Puritans, he also had a countervailing conviction of God's merciful grace, forgiveness, and calling. He

experienced a spiritual rebirth. He was “born again in Christ” to use a more contemporary terminology.

Still, Cromwell would have remained an anonymous country gentleman if the war had not catapulted him into the center of affairs. Once it did, he found his calling as a brilliant military tactician and a born leader of men. His repeated and spectacular successes left him utterly convinced that God’s purposes were working through him, though he accepted the Protectorate only reluctantly.

So far, so good. Cromwell is a religious zealot of ability, yet at the same time, there’s an ideological split in Cromwell that has sometimes baffled historians or given them the opening to offer their own conflicting interpretations. On the one hand was Cromwell the Puritan visionary, the man who urged the Rump into ever-greater reform, the man who initially embraced the Parliament of Saints, and the man who preferred religious toleration to coercion.

On the other, was the sober-sided but ruthless country gentleman who saw the need for order above all and for solutions that men would accept. This is the man who saw battlefield opportunities with a clinical clarity. This is that man who resolved to cut off Charles I’s head when he became an obstacle to peace. This is the man who dismissed both the Rump and the Parliament of Saints.

The religious and ethnic bigot of Drogheda and Wexford actually partook of both Cromwells: There was the Puritan zeal as well as the practical ruthlessness.

What sort of a ruler did this very complicated man make? Oliver Cromwell ruled England for five years. During that time, his domestic policy was rational and successful. The Protectorate provided efficient government with a minimum of corruption. It pursued legal reform and sought to make education more widely available. It enforced religious toleration. Individual Puritan congregations were allowed to worship as they saw fit. Anglicans and Catholics were mostly left alone as long as they didn’t worship publicly or too overtly. In 1655, Jews were allowed back into England for the first

time since 1290. Like many Bible-centered Christians, Cromwell was very favorably disposed to the Jews.

Cromwell's foreign policy was aggressive and successful. The navigation acts provoked trade wars with the Dutch and the Spanish. England won the First Anglo-Dutch War, and it drew its war with Spain. This led to the acquisition of more colonies, including, and this is very important, sugar-rich Jamaica. Jamaica would be at the center of a great English trading empire in the next century.

The navy also protected trade in the Mediterranean and from the Barbary pirates. English Protestants, soldiers, sailors, and merchants finally had their aggressive Protestant foreign policy. You should have a sense of England beginning to assert itself in the world under Cromwell. Unfortunately, those successes came at a price in terms of both freedom and money. In 1655, after an unsuccessful Royalist revolt, Cromwell attempted to cement his control and maintain order by dividing the country into 12 military districts, each run by a major-general.

In some ways, these were like the old Elizabethan and Stuart lords lieutenants. The major-generals were supposed to enforce law and order, regulate the Poor Law, and guarantee religious toleration for Protestants. Unlike the lords lieutenants, and more like those Anglican bishops who used to harry Puritan communities, they were also supposed to keep an eye on Royalists and Presbyterians, and suppress rebellion and riot, blasphemy and swearing, drunkenness and gambling, fornication and adultery, indecent fashions, alehouses and playhouses, Sunday sports, and even Christmas celebrations.

Some idea of the methods of the major-generals and the weight of oppression that was as a result felt by the Anglican-Royalist elite, and the cultural clash between the godly soldiers and old Royalists, emerges I think from the Christmas entry of 1657 from the diary of John Evelyn.

Evelyn was an Anglican-Royalist country gentleman. He's a loser in the wake of the war. He's part of a conservative circle trying hard to maintain the old traditions. This is what he wrote:

I went with my wife to London to celebrate Christmas Day. Mr. Gunning preached in Exeter Chapel. Sermon ended. As he was giving us the Holy Sacrament, the Chapel was surrounded by soldiers. All the communicants in assembly surprised and kept prisoners by them, some in the house, others carried away. It fell to my share to be confined in a room in the house, where yet were permitted to dine with the masters of it, the Countess of Dorset, Lady Hatton, and some others of quality who invited me.

This is the old Royalist elite.

In the afternoon came Colonel Whalley, Goffe, and others from Whitehall to examine us one by one; some they committed to the Marshalsea [a court], some to prison. When I came before them, they took my name and abode, examined me why, contrary to an ordinance made, that none should observe the superstitious time of the Nativity (so esteemed by them), I durst offend, and particularly be at Common Prayers, which they told me was but the Mass in English.

This is the old Puritan charge that Anglicanism is really just Catholicism with a Protestant veneer. “And particularly pray for Charles Stuart; for which we had no Scripture.” Can’t you just see Evelyn smirk at this? Of course, they call him “Charles Stuart” because in their eyes, he’s not the king.

I told them we did not pray for Charles Stuart, but for all Christian kings, princes, etc., governors. They replied, in so doing we prayed for the King of Spain, who was their enemy and a Papist, with other frivolous and ensnaring questions, with much threatening; and, finding no color to detain me any longer, with much pity of my ignorance, they dismissed me. These were men of high flight and above ordinances, and spake spiteful things of our Blessed Lord’s Nativity... So I got home late the next day, blessed be God!

That should have been the end of the incident, but Evelyn just can’t let it go. I think that’s good for us, because we really see what kind of an impact the rule of the major-generals had on the consciousness of these people.



These wretched miscreants held up their muskets against us as we came up to receive the sacred elements, as if they would have shot us at the altar, but yet suffering us to finish the office of Communion, as perhaps not in their instructions what they should do in case they found us in that action.

Thus, did the major-generals harry Royalists, spy on the local gentry, bully JPs, and purge corporations of anyone suspected of disloyalty to the regime. In the end, the major-generals and their godly soldiers did not succeed in stamping out any of the offensive practices they were supposed to regulate. People still went to alehouses, and they still celebrated Christmas. They did leave a lasting impression, however, as prudes, zealots, and intruders into the local communities. This is rule by the Puritans. This is the Puritan New Jerusalem, and most people are looking at it and saying, “You know, maybe this isn’t such a good idea.” In the process, these people confirm the Puritan reputation as kill-joys and the association of standing armies with tyranny.

In the end, if the Commonwealth proved that England wasn’t ready for religious and political freedom, the Protectorate proved that it wasn’t ready for big government either. Moreover, all of this big government cost far more money than had the smaller and less efficient administration of the Stuarts. That standing army was hugely expensive. That navy that fought the Barbary pirates took a lot of money. The Protectoral government spent over £2 million a year. That’s a lot more money than Elizabeth I, James I, or Charles I ever spent. You may remember figures of around £300,000 a year under Elizabeth I during wartime.

Clearly, taxes were going to have to be high. The excise—the sales tax—was continued. High monthly assessments were levied on every country in England. Royalist lands continued to be sequestered, while some the government sold outright. In other cases, they actually forced the owners to compound for the privilege of remaining on their own property. None of this enhanced Cromwell’s popularity, especially with Parliament (whose members were landowners), and they had to answer to other landowners back home.

As a consequence, Oliver Cromwell found his Parliaments not terribly cooperative. He often found that he had to dismiss them. Does this sound familiar?

In fact, by the time of Oliver Cromwell's sudden death, worn out with care, on 3 September 1658, the old ruling elite was thoroughly sick of the Protectorate's tax burden and their replacement by Puritan nonentities in positions of national and local power. These major-generals were people that nobody had ever heard of. They'd risen through the ranks of the New Model Army.

When not oppressed by the major-generals, the ruling elite feared a revival of the sects and a breakdown of order. In short, they had had their fill of godly reformation whether pervaded by wild-eyed prophets, independent congregations, saintly Parliaments, or oppressive armies. Increasingly, and somewhat myopically, even ordinary men and women began to talk and to yearn for the good old days of "Merrie Olde England" under the Stuarts.

Still, that doesn't mean that a restoration of the Stuarts was inevitable. A successor, a man of Cromwell's strength and conviction, might have made the Protectorate work. At his death, the nation sought those qualities in his son, Richard Cromwell. Richard Cromwell was an intelligent, amiable man who lacked his father's military reputation, charisma, and determination. He seems to have had the soul of a scholar. He inherited a regime that was financially exhausted and increasingly unpopular, but above all, he failed to either win over or subdue the army.

The army is always the problem for any ruler in England during this period. Think about it: The Rump never subdued the army. Barebones Parliament is dismissed by the army. Only Cromwell seemed to be able to control them.

When in the spring of 1659, he tried to assert control over the Council of the Army, the army leaders dissolved the Protectoral Parliament and sent Richard home. They then recalled the surviving members of the Rump. The Rump returns. Having been ousted from and then returned to power by the army, now the Rump tries to assert its control over that force. The response:

The army once again sends the Rump packing on 13 October 1659. Every six months there's a change of government.

Are you confused yet? Sometimes it's my intention to actually produce confusion, because so were the people of England confused. Order was breaking down all over the British Isles. Once again, Evelyn well expresses the general feeling of uncertainty:

The army now turned out the Parliament. We had now no government in the nation; all in confusion; no magistrate either owned or pretended but the soldiers, and they not agreed. God Almighty have mercy on—and settle—us!

At this point (fall of 1659), a committee of public safety is formed (I think that was the first time that term was ever used in a revolution) under General Charles Fleetwood. This was ruled by the Grandees, but by Christmas he threw up his hands. He couldn't make the country work, resigning power back to the Rump.

Now we're at the end of the year 1659. General George Monck, one of the major-generals, leads the last fully paid-up army in the British Isles, and he's based in Scotland. He begins to march south. No one knows what he would do, but everyone knows that he's going to have a determining influence on what happens. Everybody—Independents, Presbyterians, and Royalists—all hope that he will take their position.

Monck reaches London in February 1660. He vacillates a little bit, but finally he decides to resolve the Rump for good on 11 February. Londoners celebrate by roasting rump steaks in the streets. Then, he summoned back all the former members of the Long Parliament, even Royalists, so that they could dissolve themselves properly and hold new elections. The resurrected Long Parliament duly dissolved itself on 16 March.

In April, elections were held to a new Convention Parliament. It's called a "Convention Parliament" because it convenes itself. There's no king to call it into being.

In the spring of 1660, things are moving in England, and Prince Charles is hearing about it. He's listening and he realizes that, "This is my moment." That same April, while the elections are taking place for the Convention Parliament, with brilliant timing, he issues the Declaration of Breda. The Declaration of Breda promises first, amnesty to all participants in the Civil Wars except those to be omitted by Parliament. It promises religious toleration, and it promises recognition of all land sales since 1642. You see what's going on here? Charles is saying, "I'm not going to take revenge. I won't remember. Just bring me back. Just give me a chance."

He's taking a page from his grandfather's book. In many ways, Charles II is a lot more like his grandfather James I than he is like his father Charles I. He's going to allow sleeping dogs to sleep in peace.

It worked. The ensuing elections for the Convention Parliament returned moderates and conservatives in a landslide. The Convention Parliament will be dominated by Royalists and Presbyterians. Presbyterians were Parliamentarians, but the most moderate. They're the ones who still wanted to negotiate with the king. They're the ones who still wanted a State Church. This is a pretty good line-up for Charles. Both groups want the restoration of the monarchy.

Later that spring in May, the Convention Parliament issues an invitation and dispatches a fleet to convey Charles II back to his ancestral kingdom. The flagship of the fleet is the biggest ship in the Royal Navy, the *Naseby*, named after the great parliamentary victory over the king's forces. For this occasion, it's renamed the *Royal Charles*.

Charles II landed to wild rejoicing on his birthday, 29 May 1660. John Evelyn (this poor man has gone through so much, we've got to give him the word here) wrote:

This day, came in his majesty Charles II to London after a sad and long exile and calamitous suffering both of the king and Church, being 17 years. This was also his birthday, and with a triumph of above 20,000 horse and foot, brandishing their swords, and shouting with unexpressible joy—the ways strewed with flowers,

the bells ringing, the streets hung with tapestry, fountains running with wine—the mayor, aldermen, and all the companies, in their liveries, chains of gold, banners; lords and nobles, cloth of silver, gold, and velvet everybody clad in; the windows and balconies, all set with ladies; trumpets, music, and myriads of people flocking the streets; and was as far as Rochester [which is on the east coast], so as they were seven hours in passing the city, even from 2:00 in the afternoon until 9:00 at night.

In the above description and in contemporary prints, it's as if the Great Chain of Being was not just restored, it was laid out end-to-end for everyone to see. The mayor, aldermen, the companies in their liveries, the chains of gold, the lords and nobles—that's the Great Chain of Being. There it is. Evelyn concluded, "I stood in the Strand and beheld it and blessed God."

The old order was restored. The clock was turned back. The people of England had awakened from a long national nightmare, a winter of profound discontent, to a sunny day in springtime enraptured with their new young sovereign of the old Stuart line.

Both he and they embraced the concept of restoration, bending over backwards to prove all was forgiven: The British Civil Wars never really happened, did they? The king would date his reign from 30 January 1649, as if his father had died of natural causes and there had never been an interregnum, Commonwealth, or Protectorate.

Ancient household servants came out of the woodwork asking for their old jobs back. This was a problem because Charles II had noticed that the Protectorate was pretty efficient, and he wanted to keep as many of the Protectorate's servants in power as he could. Some of the old Royalists were frozen out, but most worked in tandem with their former enemies.

Even those who'd hounded the first Charles Stuart to his death did not necessarily pay much of a price. Less than a dozen signers of the death warrant (there were nearly 60) were tried and executed. However, these did suffer the full fury of the old Tudor treason laws. They were hanged, drawn

(that is pulled apart by horses) and quartered (their bodies cut up into four parts), and their boiled remains impaled on the gates of London.

Even the bodies of Cromwell, Ireton, and Bradshaw—all of whom had quite conveniently and fortunately for them died in the interval—suffered the regime’s wrath. They were exhumed and hanged in shrouds at Tyburn, their bodies were mutilated by loyal London apprentices, and their heads placed on pikes outside of Westminster Hall, the site of the heinous act that had led to the royal martyrdom.

At this point, I’ve got to tell you the story of Cromwell’s head. It remained on duty outside of Westminster Hall for over 20 years. Finally, one night it blew down in a storm. It was recovered and passed from hand to hand. Finally, nobody knew what to do with it. The family didn’t want it, so it was donated back to Oliver Cromwell’s old college, Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, the idea I suppose being that what better place for a head than the university college.

There the dons respectfully interred the head in a secret location—a location that remains secret to this day, just in case any latter-day Royalists would wish to wreak vengeance on the remains of Oliver Cromwell. We don’t actually know where the head is, but I can assure you that it is safe.

These grisly events should tell us something. Maybe all wasn’t forgiven. Maybe you can’t go home again. Maybe the Great Chain of Being was not so easily mended. After all, could either Charles Stuart or the English people who now welcomed him back with open arms ever forget that they’d vilified his father, taken up arms against him, and killed him? Could they forget that they’d broken the Great Chain of Being? That they’d smashed the old institution of monarchy, abolished the old Tudor-Stuart state, and experimented with new forms of government, radical political systems, and iconoclastic religious ideas?

By now, you may have noticed that the 1640s and the 1650s in England are a little bit like the 1960s and 1970s in the history of the United States: a time of widespread questioning of authority, of burgeoning individuality, wild experimentation, and a seeming imminent revolution that never quite

happened. As with those decades, for those of us who lived in their wake, could the genie ever be put back into the bottle? Can you actually go back? Is restoration possible? Could the English constitution and Church and State ever go back to what it was in 1603, or 1625, or 1641? Should it?

If so—if this was a restoration—then what was the meaning of the Civil Wars? What did all that sound and fury and bloodshed mean? Had they solved the long-term tensions left over from the Tudors? If they hadn't, what would happen then? The next few years would reveal the answers to those questions.

In this lecture, we saw the men who made the English Civil Wars and revolution attempt to preserve both their recent gains and their ancient holdings by creating a state that was at once strong, hierarchical, and non-monarchical. They want to hold onto what they've got, but they also want to make sure that they've gotten rid of anyone who can question them or make their lives more difficult.

In particular, we saw the bestriding figure of Oliver Cromwell attempt to create a State and Church that would provide good government and a Puritan notion of religious toleration at home, while commanding respect and winning treasure and territory abroad. We saw that in the end, he failed, not least because the people of England were not ready to assume the financial responsibilities and put up with the central control that all of that implied.

Or maybe there's a simpler explanation. Could it be that the curse on breaking the Great Chain of Being still held? Could it be that somewhere the Bishop of Carlisle was laughing on Restoration Day?

What would the new king make of the conflicting desires of his people? Of these five questions that were still left over from the Civil Wars? Would he forge a more successful regime than his father had done? Than Cromwell had done?

The answer to this and most of the questions posed in this lecture in the next one, Lecture Thirty-Five.

# The Restoration Settlement: 1660–70

## Lecture 35

**The English people—having killed their king, and having tried a republic and then a monarchy in all but name under Oliver Cromwell—decided to try to turn back the clock and restore the very Stuart line that they tossed out of the country a little more than a decade before. How do you do that? How do you restore a system that had been haphazardly dismantled over the course of a decade? Did Restoration mean that the Civil Wars had settled nothing? What, if anything, had been settled?**

**T**he British Civil Wars settled none of the long-term tensions that produced them, but the English ruling elite did learn three lessons from the wars: England needed both a king and a Parliament. This did not, however, settle which should be sovereign. Old Royalists favored the king as the bulwark of order. Old Roundheads favored Parliament as the guardian of liberty. Puritans were political and religious radicals, to be watched as closely as Catholics. Finally, the common people were a dangerous ally. Never again would the English ruling elite enlist them to effect political or religious change.

The Restoration settlement of the state was a compromise. Charles II resumed many of the powers wielded by his father. He could make peace and war. He could call, prorogue, and dissolve Parliament. He could name government officials. He alone could call out the militia. He could dispense with the law in individual cases and suspend it in times of emergency. He received a financial settlement intended to yield £1,200,000 a year to run his government. However, the Convention Parliament contained many Presbyterians who had fought against Charles I and had no wish to make his son absolute. Thus, each of these powers was qualified. The king had no standing army; Parliament would not vote him the funds for one. (The New Model Army was paid off.) The Triennial Act still required the king to call Parliament at least once every three years. Parliament could still impeach the king's officials and many of the prerogative courts by which he imposed his will (the Star Chamber, High Commission, and others were never restored). Local nobles and gentry still raised the militia for the king—or not, as they



saw fit. The suspending and dispensing power did not have the force of statute law.

Though intended to yield £1,200,000, the taxes voted in 1660 initially failed to do so. In any case, Charles II regularly spent more than this amount. The new religious settlement also disappointed the king. Charles II favored religious toleration. But a new Parliament elected in 1661, known as the Cavalier Parliament, was dominated by Anglican Royalists. They still viewed Catholics as traitors. They now viewed Puritans—both Independents and Presbyterians—as king-killing religious and political radicals. They commemorated Charles I on 30 January as “the Royal Martyr.” They restored the bishops, Church courts, the Book of Common Prayer, vestments, and the right of advowson.

They then passed a series of laws, the Clarendon Code (after Charles II’s Lord Chancellor), designed to marginalize Puritans. The Corporation Act of 1661 required municipal officeholders to renounce Presbyterianism and take Anglican communion. The Quaker Act of 1662 made it illegal to refuse to plead in court or to worship in groups of five or more outside of a parish church. The Act of Uniformity of 1662 required all ministers and teachers to assent to the Book of Common Prayer. The Conventicle Act of 1664 ordered huge fines (and exile for a third offense) for attending Puritan meetings. The Five Mile Act of 1665 made it illegal for a non-Anglican preacher to come within five miles of a town or his former parish without swearing an oath against rebellion. These laws drove Puritans out of the Church and underground. Because they no longer had any hope of “purifying” the Church of England, the word “Puritan” ceased to apply. From henceforward, they were “Dissenters” or “Non-conformists” and subject to persecution, just as Catholics were. Clearly, the Restoration settlement left a great deal of power in the hands of the Anglican aristocracy, both in Parliament and in the countryside.

Unfortunately, Charles II and his court soon lost the good impression they had created in 1660. Charles II’s personality contrasted favorably with his father’s stiffness and formality. He was highly intelligent, witty, affable, and approachable. He was vigorous—on the tennis court and in the bedroom. He was tolerant, flexible, and merciful—even toward former enemies. Few

were tried and executed for his father's execution, though Cromwell's body was exhumed and mutilated. Living Roundheads were often reappointed to the offices they had held under the Commonwealth and Protectorate. But old Royalists accused the king of forgetting his friends. Charles II was often disloyal, unreliable, and self-serving. He was also lazy and indecisive. Above all, he was a cynic who trusted no one. Who could blame him, given his own history and that of his family?

This goes far to explain the king's obsession with diversion and the extravagance and amorality of his court. The Restoration court was the greatest center of cultural patronage of its day. It gave rise to many new fashions: the comedy of intrigue; the first stage actresses; the three-piece suit for men; and in England, champagne, tea, and ice cream. It promoted the careers of, among others: Dryden, Etherege, Rochester, and Wycherley in poetry and drama; Purcell and Blow in music; Lely and Kneller in painting; Gibbons in carving; and Wren in architecture. The court was a great center of political intrigue, in which politicians, courtiers, and royal mistresses vied for power. Among the latter were Barbara Palmer, Countess of Castlemaine; Louise de Kerouaille, Duchess of Portsmouth; the actress Nell Gwyn; and many others, who produced 14 acknowledged royal bastards.

The time and money spent by the king on diversion drained the royal Treasury, and wounded the dignity of the Crown, but made the court tremendously attractive for anyone on the make. Unfortunately, the king's own wife, a Portuguese princess named Catherine of Braganza, was incapable of having children. Her infertility and Catholicism made her unpopular. They also increased the importance, as heir apparent, of the king's younger brother, James, Duke of York. Thus, to England's other problems can be added a succession crisis.

Clearly, Charles II was ill-fitted to solve the problems that had led to the Civil Wars. On sovereignty, he was an absolutist at heart. He admired his cousin, Louis XIV, who ruled France absolutely. On finance, Charles could not rule without Parliament, or raise an army to intimidate it, such as Louis

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**Clearly, Charles II was ill-fitted to solve the problems that had led to the Civil Wars.**

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had at his disposal, because he spent money on other things. On religion, the king's Anglican subjects worried about his apparent tolerance for Catholics and Dissenters. In fact, although Charles II was impressed by Catholicism's emphasis on hierarchy and obedience, he was careful to remain a public Anglican. But by the early 1670s, just as it became obvious that the king and his Catholic queen would have no legitimate heir, the Duke of York, next in line for the throne, began to worship openly as a Catholic.

On foreign policy, early in the reign, England's principal enemy was the Dutch Republic. The Dutch were aggressive traders seeking to break the Navigation Acts and, thus, into England's overseas empire. The result was the Second Anglo-Dutch War of 1664–1668. The war began well with the capture of New Amsterdam, renamed New York, in 1664. It ended disastrously when Charles II laid up the fleet to save money, allowing the Dutch to sail up the Medway, burning English shipping. The war brought down Lord Chancellor Clarendon and disgraced the new Restoration regime. Beginning around 1670, Charles II and his new ministry would try to solve his constitutional, fiscal, religious, and foreign policy problems with a series of bold strokes. ■

### Suggested Reading

Bucholz and Key, *Early Modern England*, chap. 9, secs. 1–3.

Coward, *Stuart Age*, chap. 8.

Kishlansky, *Monarchy Transformed*, chap. 9.

### Questions to Consider

1. Consider the personality of Charles II. How would he fare in today's political world?
2. Why did Charles II and the Anglican Royalists who had supported his father so loyally not see eye to eye? Why was he so out of sympathy with the wishes and prejudices of the English people?

# The Restoration Settlement: 1660–70

## Lecture 35—Transcript

At the end of the last lecture, the English people—having killed their king, and having tried a republic and then a monarchy in all but name under Oliver Cromwell—decided to try to turn back the clock and restore the very Stuart line that they tossed out of the country a little more than a decade before. How do you do that? How do you restore a system that had been haphazardly dismantled over the course of a decade? Did Restoration mean that the Civil Wars had settled nothing? What, if anything, had been settled?

This lecture examines the Restoration settlements in Church and State and the personality of Charles II that did so much to undo those settlements. It describes his court, his artistic patronage, the political and social role of his many mistresses, and his initial solutions to the problems of sovereignty, finance, religion, foreign policy, and local control that had plagued his ancestors. As we'll see, those initial solutions were no more successful than his father's had been.

As you've probably figured out by now, the British Civil Wars settled none of the long-term tensions that produced them. Rather, after so many bloody battles, experiments in government, and upheavals in politics and religion, the English people appear to have opted to go back to square one: the Restoration of the English constitution and Church and State as they were before the Civil Wars. In fact, the Restoration settlements only appeared to turn the clock back, for you can never really go home again. The resultant false sense of *déjà vu* left contemporaries (and some later historians) confused and increasingly bitterly divided about what the Civil Wars had meant.

All of this is not to say that the Civil Wars settled nothing. Over the previous 20 or 30 years, the English ruling class did learn three hard lessons. First, clearly England needed both a king and a Parliament. The 1650s proved that you needed a king, and the 1630s had proved that you needed a Parliament. What of course this didn't settle was the vexed question of which should be sovereign. Old Royalists and Roundheads would continue to fight the war on this question in Parliament and in print.

Old Royalists, like John Evelyn, favored the king as the bulwark of order. That is, for them the lesson of the past 30 years was clear. Kings might err, but the king was still God's lieutenant. His authority and place in the constitution were not to be questioned. To kill the king was a heinous sin against the divine order. For these folks, Charles I was a martyr.

That sad sordid history of the Commonwealth and the Protectorate, and the Levellers and the sects, only proved to old Royalists that the doctrine of the Great Chain of Being was correct: "Untune that string and hark what discord follows." The 1650s had been a punishment for the heinous sin of killing the king. By the end of the reign, these convictions about the meanings of the British Civil Wars and revolutions would provide the underlying ideology for a fully-fledged political party: the Tories. Old Roundheads, on the other hand, had a different take on the Civil Wars. For them, Parliament had proved that it was the true guarantor of English liberties and therefore the rightful sovereign power in the constitution. For them, the last 30 years had proved that kings were not gods; they were men. A bad king could and should be deposed. Only Parliament represented the true interests of the English people. As for killing the previous king, they'd got away with it, hadn't they?

Of course, these things could only be said *sotto voce* amid the euphoria of the Restoration of 1660, but they would eventually form the foundation of the other great political party that emerged during the reign of Charles II: the Whigs. That's all the first lesson. The second lesson learned by the English ruling class was that Puritans could no more be trusted with religious authority than Catholics. From henceforward, Puritans were associated with political and religious radicalism: killing the king, republicanism, the toleration of outlandish religious beliefs, and intolerance towards beloved ceremonies and traditions.

This doesn't mean the Puritans disappeared from public life, but it does mean that they no longer had any hope of winning control of the English Church or of English society. Following the Civil Wars, Puritans would be an embattled minority fighting for survival. Because neither they nor Catholics would give up their belief, religion, like sovereignty, would remain an unsolved problem in England, and in fact one that had grown hotter. Remember Evelyn's bitter

feelings about his treatment at the hands of Cromwell's soldiers? These resentments are going to make the religious problem even more difficult.

Finally, the third lesson: Clearly, the common people were a dangerous ally. Never again would the English ruling elite use violence or enlist their social inferiors to effect political or religious change. The past quarter century had proven that that tack was altogether too unpredictable. It was too threatening to order. This, of course, raises the question of just how such change would be affected in the new disposition.

Given the lack of consensus that I've been describing, the Restoration settlements were bound to be a compromise. In the state, they did not restore the king's powers to what they were in 1603 or 1625, but more like what the position was in 1641. Still, on the surface, from the king's point of view, this wasn't such a bad deal.

At the insistence of the Royalists in Parliament, Charles II received back many of the powers that had been wielded by his father. He could make peace and war. He could call, prorogue, and dissolve Parliament. He could name government officials of his own choosing and remove judges at will. According to the Militia Acts of 1661 and 1662, only he could call out the militia. You may remember that Parliament had called it out in 1642.

He could dispense with the law in individual cases and suspend it in times of national emergency. Finally, recalling that such powers would be hollow if the king were poor and constantly begging Parliament for money, the Convention Parliament voted him a generous financial settlement intended to yield £1, 200,000 a year to run the government. In particular, they restored the Crown lands taken by the republic; they granted Charles II the customs for life (something his father had never been granted); and they continued the excise on liquor.

God's deputy was restored to his throne with a full plentitude of royal power. Or was he? Remember that the Convention Parliament was not just made up of Royalists. It also had many Presbyterians. These were the moderate sort of Puritans. They rejected the most extreme legislation of 1641–1642,

and they rejected the killing of the king in 1649. They thought those things were awful.

But they did not regret the tax strike of 1638 or even the taking up of arms against Charles I in 1642. They justified fighting the war. They had no wish to make his son absolute, so each of the powers I've just described was qualified. The king could make peace or war, but Parliament would not vote him the money for a standing army. They vividly remembered rule by the major-generals and what a standing army did to the liberties of English country gentlemen. They feared that Charles II would use an army to make him absolute the way Louis XIV was doing on the continent in France. The New Model Army was paid off, leaving a few guard regiments stationed at royal palaces.

The king could call and dismiss Parliament, but the Triennial Act still required him to call a new one every three years. While the king had the appointment and dismissal of government officials and judges, Parliament could still impeach those officials. Many of the prerogative courts that the king had used to impose his will—Star Chamber, High Commission, the Court of Requests, those councils of the Wales and the North—were never restored.

It's true that only the king could call out the militia, but it was still up to the English ruling class whether they would heed the call—all those lords lieutenants and JPs. The suspending and dispensing power were controversial and did not have the force of statute law. As we'll see, there was a lot of argument about them.

Finally, though the taxes voted by Parliament were estimated to yield £1,200,000, in actuality during the first two years of the reign, they only yielded £541,000—less than half of the designed amount.

Give Parliament credit. It responded in 1662 by passing the Hearth Tax. That's a tax on chimneys. It's a pretty good measure of wealth: If you've got a lot of chimneys, you've got a big house. This eventually did bring the king's revenue up to the magic number of £1,200,000. Remember, Charles

II was the grandson of James I. He regularly overspent this amount by £200,000-300,000. I'll explain on what later on in this lecture.

In other words, just like every other Stuart and most Tudor kings before him, Charles II would be chronically short of money and so continually dependent upon Parliament. Thus, the problems of sovereignty, finance, and local control (since local officials would have to collect taxes) remained contentious—and so with religion.

The religious settlement left a lot to be desired from Charles II's point of view. It's true that in 1660, the king was restored as Supreme Head of the Church of England, but he favored—and remember he'd promised in the Declaration of Breda—religious toleration. Charles favored toleration for reasons both personal and political. Partly, he wanted to make everybody happy and reconcile all sides to his regime, partly because he felt that he owed a debt. Remember that he'd been sheltered by Catholics in 1651, and Presbyterians had worked for his Restoration in 1660.

Finally, Charles, like Elizabeth and James I, was a tolerant man at heart. He didn't want to persecute anybody. Like every other king of England who had an idea about religion, however, Charles could only secure his tolerant religious settlement by going through Parliament. That was the legacy of Henry VIII. He'd made Parliament a partner in making religion in England.

Remember, the Convention was not really a proper Parliament, so early in the reign in 1661, Charles II dismissed it and called a new one. That new Parliament would come to be known as the Cavalier Parliament because it was filled with old Royalists. In other words, Royalists did better in this election than Presbyterians did.

That was a problem because the Royalists had scores to settle from the Civil War, and they weren't going to be happy with Charles's toleration. Royalists were mainly Anglicans, and Anglicans had learned a lot during the Civil Wars and interregnum. They still viewed Catholics as potential traitors, of course, but now they viewed Puritans, both Independents and Presbyterians, as dangerous religious and political radicals. When a conservative Anglican now saw a Puritan, he saw a king-killer, a Digger, a Ranter, a Quaker, a



Fifth Monarchist, a persecutor of poor Anglican clergy, a defiler of churches, an imposer of high taxes, a tool of the major-generals, and a breaker of the Great Chain of Being.

The occasional diehard radical revolt only confirmed these ideas. For example, in 1661, Venner's Rising involved 35 Fifth Monarchists who attempted to proclaim King Jesus in the middle of London. Naturally, it didn't work. All it did was confirm Anglicans in the notion that Puritans are nuts.

In contrast, Anglicans now became the staunchest defenders of the Great Chain of Being and the monarchy. Their clergy thundered from the pulpits on the necessity of loyalty, passive obedience, and non-resistance to the sovereign. Annually, on 30 January, they would commemorate the feast of "the Royal Martyr" with sermons reminding their auditors of the saintliness of Charles I and the cruelty of the Puritans who killed him.

There's an irony here. You'd think that all these Royalists would be anxious to do the king's bidding, but since they're Anglicans—precisely because they're Royalist and precisely because they want to settle the score of Charles I's execution—they're not going to follow the king on toleration. The memories of the 1640s and 1650s are too bitter.

Even before the king's return, there had been a spontaneous revival of Anglicanism in the churches of England. As soon as it could, Parliament restored the bishops, the Church courts, the Book of Common Prayer, vestments, the right of advowson, and hundreds of Anglican clergy who displaced Puritans who'd come in during the previous 20 years.

The Cavalier Parliament didn't only wish to restore Anglicanism in England. It also set about to eliminate Puritanism. That is, after passing the positive legislation to restore the Church of England, it then began to pass a series of laws designed to drive Puritans out of public life. I should explain that these laws are sometimes referred to as the "Clarendon Code" after Charles II's Lord Chancellor, Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon. That's really unfair because Clarendon himself wanted some degree of toleration. It might be better to call them the "Cavalier Code."

First, the Corporation Act of 1661 required all municipal officeholders to renounce Presbyterianism and take Anglican communion. This law also gave the king sweeping powers to redraw city charters and throw people off of the corporation. The Quaker Act of 1662 made it illegal to refuse to plead in court or to worship in groups of five or more outside of a parish church. The Act of Uniformity, also of 1662, required all ministers, professors, and schoolmasters to assent to the Book of Common Prayer and repudiate rebellion against the king. Over 1,700 Puritan clergy couldn't do this, and they lost their livings by 1663.

The Licensing Act, also of 1662, restored censorship of the press. From now on, all publications had to name their author and publisher and be submitted for approval to a government licensor—a censor. The Conventicle Act of 1664 ordered huge fines to anyone attending a Puritan meeting. The Five Mile Act of 1665 made it illegal for a non-Anglican preacher to come within five miles of a town or his former parish without swearing an oath against rebellion.

What's the point? I think it's obvious. The point is to expel Puritans from the clergy, the schools, the cities, local government, and from English public life and discourse. The net effect was to drive Puritans out of the Church of England and underground. In fact, at this point, I have to introduce a change in terminology. They're no longer Puritans, are they? They no longer have any hope of "purifying" the Church of England. From now on, I'm going to use the term "Dissenter" or "Non-conformist" to indicate these folks.

Dissenters become second-class citizens and potential enemies of the state thanks to the Cavalier Code. From henceforward, like Catholics, Dissenters would face persecution via crippling fines, seizure of property, imprisonment, or transportation to the colonies. Between 1660 and 1668, just to take one example, some 15,000 Quakers were sent to prison. Four hundred and fifty died there, which of course explains the attractiveness of the colonies in the New World to this group.

Clearly, the Restoration settlement did restore the king to great power in Church and State, but it left even more power in the hands of the Anglican landed aristocracy, both in Parliament and in the countryside.

The next question (we've taken awhile to get to it) is who was this new king and how was he fitted to negotiate with this powerful landed aristocracy? As with Henry VIII or Charles I, it's virtually impossible to separate what happened to the Restoration settlement from the personal characteristics of the king. This was an age of personal monarchy. The government was his Majesty's government. Every document is issued in his name. Loyalty was sworn to him, not to England. Royal personality mattered.

Few royal personalities have been so vivid as that of Charles II. Let's begin with the positive. The good points are many. They often contrast favorably with Charles I's stiffness and formality. Charles II was highly intelligent, witty, affable, and approachable. He spoke fluent French and some Italian. He took an avid interest in the sciences. He was a founding patron of the Royal Society. He established a laboratory in his palace at Whitehall.

His wit was legendary, though in preparing this lecture I realized that it's really based less on wordplay and more on a kind of self-deprecation. Charles II, like any gentleman, was very good at putting people at ease. Thus, to the painter Sir Peter Lely upon seeing his portrait, Charles said, "Odds fish! I'm an ugly fellow." On his apparently colorless, but really shrewd, Groom of the Bedchamber, Sidney Godolphin, a man who would rise to become the Lord Treasurer of England, he said, "He's never in the way and never out of the way."

On the other hand, on his niece's husband, Prince George of Denmark, he said, "I've tried him drunk. I've tried him sober. There's nothing in him." When told that the Countess of Castlemaine, one of his mistresses, had converted to Catholicism, he replied that, "[He] never concerned himself with the souls of ladies, but with their bodies, in so far as they were gracious enough to allow [him]."

Even on his deathbed, his good breeding shone through. He apologized to those in attendance, "I am sorry gentleman for being such a time dying," and he begged that they would forgive him.

He would, in short, have made a terrific talk show host. He was vigorous on the tennis court and in the bedroom. He was tolerant, flexible, open to compromise, and merciful, as we saw in the last lecture.

That mercy—the fact that he was willing to take in old Protectoral servants—meant that many old Royalists didn't get their old jobs back. These people had sacrificed for this man, and they accused the king of forgetting his former friends. In fact, it's true: Charles II was often disloyal, unreliable, and self-serving. He was also lazy and indecisive.

Above all, Charles II was a cynic who trusted no one. Who could blame him given his past history and that of his family? After all, the very people who now professed their undying loyalty had killed his father and great grandmother (Mary Queen of Scots) and chased him first into a tree and then out of the country. While living abroad hand-to-mouth, he had been spied on, threatened, denounced, and betrayed repeatedly to Cromwell's intelligence service. No wonder his chief goal was to avoid trouble and having, "to go on [his] travels again."

I think this goes far to explain why the king was obsessed with diversion. This in turn explains the extravagance and amorality of his court. The Restoration court of Charles II was the greatest center of cultural patronage of its day. It gave rise to many new fashions in England: the comedy of intrigue; the rhymed heroic drama; the first stage actresses; the man's three-piece suit; periwigs; champagne; tea; and, again for the first time in England, ice cream.

It promoted the careers of, among others: Dryden, Etherege, Rochester, and Wycherley in poetry and drama; Purcell and Blow in music; Lely and Kneller in painting; Gibbons in carving; and Sir Christopher Wren in architecture. The result was the last truly fun and splendid court in English history. As the French ambassador reported to Louis XIV, "There is a ball and a comedy every other day. The rest of the days are spent at play, gambling, either at the queen's or at the Lady Castlemaine's, where the company does not fail to be treated to a good supper."

The two ladies in the above quote are important. The first was the king's wife; the second was the king's favorite mistress. Among the most prominent of his mistresses were Barbara Palmer, Countess of Castlemaine, later Duchess of Cleveland; Louisse de Kerouaille, Duchess of Portsmouth; and the actress Nell Gwyn. We'll talk more about Nell in the next lecture.

There were many others, and the result was 14 acknowledged royal bastards. No wonder that one of Charles II's nicknames was "Old Rowley" after the most successful stud horse in his stable. It could truly be said that if Charles II was not the father of his country, he was the father of a fair proportion thereof.

The time and the money spent by the king on his mistresses, children, art, and diversion had at least three effects. First, it drained the royal Treasury. Remember, he's got £1,200,000 to play with. He spent £60,000 in the early years of the reign just feeding the court. By the way, that is researched from my first book. He spent £180,000 a year paying pensions to various favorites.

The second result of all this was that it wounded the dignity of the Crown. This was not the decorous court of Charles I. People assumed that the king listened to all these favorites and mistresses. In fact, the theory was that if you got the right mistress into the king's bedchamber, you could manipulate the king. This explains, for example, why when the king took a shine to the pretty young Francis Stuart, the Duke of Buckingham, the son of Charles I's Buckingham, decided that he saw an opportunity. He formed a committee to get Mistress Stuart for the king. In other words, Buckingham thinks, "If I get Mistress Stuart into the bedchamber, I will be able to manipulate the king."

In fact, there's almost no evidence that Charles II actually listened to what his mistresses and courtiers had to say. As we've said repeatedly in this course, however, perception is everything at a court.

Finally, the third effect is that this was a very attractive place for anyone who's interested in power, office, or pleasure. It was fun. It was disgraceful, but it was fun.

The one woman in England whom the king seemed incapable of impregnating was unfortunately his own wife, a Portuguese princess by the name of Catherine of Braganza. The marriage had been contracted in 1662, and it was, of course, diplomatic. The hope had been that it would result in lots of heirs and lots of trade. As part of her dowry, Catherine brought Tangiers on the African coast and Bombay in India.

This marriage would prove disappointing in every respect. First, Catherine was apparently infertile. Second, Tangiers was too costly to defend and was abandoned in 1684. It might have been very useful for Mediterranean trade. Finally, Bombay would be very profitable in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, but that wouldn't be for decades.

Catherine's infertility and her Catholicism made her very unpopular. They also increased the importance, as heir apparent, of the king's younger brother, James, Duke of York. If you want to add to the problems facing later Stuart England, now we have a succession crisis.

Clearly, Charles II was ill-fitted to solve the problems that had led to the Civil Wars. Let's go through the five issues once again and just sort of round up how this king would deal with them. First, sovereignty: Charles II was every inch a Stuart and so at heart, an absolutist. Remember, he'd been raised in Europe. He'd been raised in the shadow of the court of Louis XIV, and he saw what Louis XIV was doing across the Channel. He saw absolute monarchy in action, and he kind of liked it.

Fortunately for England, Charles II didn't have the drive to work hard. Louis XIV was one of the hardest-working monarchs in the Early-modern period. Charles wasn't like that, so he was unlikely to be able to successfully pursue an absolutist program. Nor could he do without the money provided by Parliament. If you're going to be an absolutist, you can't have Parliament breathing down your neck, and Charles needed money.

We come to the problem of finance. As we've seen, Charles spent money he didn't have. That only put him further into the hands of Parliament. It meant that he would always have to call Parliament. It also meant that Parliament was unlikely to be very generous with him. As with James I, they knew

where the money was going. Above all, they were unlikely to vote him the money for an army because they knew that he might use that army to make himself absolute as Louis XIV was doing.

What about religion? We've seen that the king's Anglican subjects were not particularly tolerant towards Catholics and Dissenters, and Charles II was. In fact, they worried that he was a secret Catholic. Remember, he'd been raised by Henrietta Maria. We're not sure about this. We know that Charles II was in fact attracted to the hierarchy and obedience of Catholicism, but he was a smart man and he was careful to remain a public Anglican.

Unfortunately, by the early 1670s, just as it became clear that the king and his Catholic queen would be unable to have a legitimate heir, the king's brother, the Duke of York, the next in line for the throne, began to worship openly as a Catholic. Call this Henrietta Maria's revenge. This became especially alarming because of a turn in foreign policy at this time. Remember, the next heir to the throne of England looks to be a Catholic.

In 1660, England's traditional enemies, Spain and France, were still recovering from the effects of the Thirty Years' War. Spain, in fact, would never fully recover. Early in the reign, England's principal enemy was the independent Netherlands. There were many points of disagreement with the Dutch. The Dutch Republic was obviously not a monarchy. It was a republic. Moreover, the Dutch were Calvinists, theologically a lot closer to Dissenters than to Anglicans. Most importantly, the Dutch were aggressive traders. They wanted to break the Navigation Acts. They wanted to trade with England's overseas empire.

These tensions resulted in the Second Anglo-Dutch Naval War, which was fought between 1664–1668. In many ways, this is the regime's first real test. Remember, Cromwell had won his war against the Dutch. How would the Restoration regime do?

The war began well for England with the capture of New Amsterdam, which the English renamed New York after the Duke of York in 1664. The war continued with a series of indecisive naval engagements in the Channel in which the Duke of York distinguished himself as Lord High Admiral. But

it ended disastrously when, in 1667, Charles II decided to save money by laying up the fleet. That allowed the Dutch to sail up the Thames and the Medway, burning English shipping.

That disaster—combined with the recent effects of the Great Plague of 1665 and the Great Fire of 1666—sent government revenues plummeting just as government debt was skyrocketing due to the war. As a result of the crisis, Lord Chancellor Clarendon fell and was replaced by a new ministry, a loose coalition of five politicians who were known as the “CABAL,” after the initials of their last names: Lords Clifford, Arlington, Buckingham, Ashley, and Lauderdale. As we’ll see, the CABAL would propose their own solution to the five areas of tension. They would make the king absolute, wealthy, and powerful by allying him with Catholic France under Louis XIV.

In this lecture, we learned that despite the widespread good feelings with which the reign of Charles II began, the Restoration settlements in Church and State did not solve the five major problems left over from the Civil Wars. In a way, this is surprising because it could be argued that in 1660 the Royalist side had won. They’d seized final victory from the jaws of repeated defeats. As we’ve seen, the Anglican-Royalist nobility and the gentry did set about creating their version of an idyllic England following the Restoration and the Cavalier Parliament.

But as we’ve also seen, Charles II was too much attracted to absolutism, religious toleration, and pleasure to behave himself on these issues of sovereignty, finance, foreign policy, religion, or local control. By the end of the 1660s, the stage was set for the king and his new ministry to attempt to solve those problems to his own liking and in a way that would appall both Roundheads and Cavaliers. The story of the king’s great gamble will occupy us in the next lecture.



# The Failure of the Restoration: 1670–78

## Lecture 36

**The English people were torn. ... They didn't much like the Dutch, but the French were an ancestral enemy and they were Catholic. ... Old Parliamentarians, in particular, concluded that it was Catholic and absolutist France that was the greatest danger to Protestantism in England, so they were very surprised and not a little alarmed when, in 1670, Charles II and the CABAL signed the Treaty of Dover with Louis XIV.**

Charles II may have hankered after absolutism and, perhaps, Catholicism, but he could not become an English Sun King as long as he depended on Parliament for money. Without money, he lacked an army to enforce his will in the countryside. Because the members of Parliament feared that this was precisely why he wanted more money (that is, to impose absolutism and Catholicism), they refused to vote it to him. In 1670, Charles II and his new ministry, known as the CABAL (for the initials of their last names: Lords Clifford, Arlington, Buckingham, Ashley, and Lauderdale), attempted to solve his constitutional, fiscal, religious, and local government problems with a bold stroke in foreign policy.

Charles and the CABAL believed that the way out of the impasse was to ally with France and its ruler, Louis XIV. Louis XIV was the wealthiest and most powerful ruler in Europe. Thus, he might be able to assist Charles in ruling without Parliament and in wreaking vengeance on the Dutch. Moreover, circa 1670, Louis was looking for allies for his scheme to absorb the Spanish Empire: Since 1665, Spain had been ruled by the sickly and mentally incompetent Carlos II. Because Carlos was incapable of producing an heir, the Spanish Empire would be up for grabs when he died. Louis was married to a Spanish princess, giving his heirs some claim to the Spanish throne. His goal was to combine French military power with the wealth of Spain's overseas possessions.

The only obstacle to Louis's plans was the Dutch Republic. The only major republican and Protestant state west of the Rhine, the Dutch sought to maintain a balance of power against Louis XIV. Their leading statesman, William of Orange, sought to create a Grand Alliance against Louis and Bourbon-Catholic domination of Europe. This led to a series of wars in which Louis XIV conquered numerous small states along the Rhine and Dutch border and came close to wiping the Dutch off the map. The English were torn over these issues, given that France was an ancestral enemy and the Dutch, a recent one. But old Parliamentarians, in particular, concluded that Catholic and absolutist France represented the greater danger to English liberties. Thus, Charles II alarmed many when he signed the Treaty of Dover in 1670. Its terms were as follows:

- Charles's British kingdoms (England, Scotland, Ireland) would ally with Louis's France against the Dutch Republic.
- Louis would supply Charles with a subsidy of about £225,000.
- According to a secret provision of the treaty, Charles would convert publicly to Catholicism and reconcile his kingdoms to Rome. In return, Louis would supply an additional £150,000 and troops if England rebelled.

Thus, each side got what it wanted. Louis acquired the Royal Navy in his struggle against the Dutch. Charles would solve his constitutional, fiscal, religious, foreign policy, and local government problems at one stroke.

In 1672, the king acted. He issued a Declaration of Indulgence suspending penalties against both Dissenters and Catholics. He hoped that former Puritans would be so pleased to be tolerated again that they would not notice or mind that Catholics were being tolerated as well. In fact, most Dissenters felt that Catholic emancipation was too high a price to pay for their own freedom of worship. Both they and the Anglicans believed that this was the first step toward a second Counter-Reformation reminiscent of Bloody Mary.

To provide additional quick cash for the war, the king temporarily suspended payments on his debt. The Stop of the Exchequer ruined many merchants and financiers who had loaned money to the government. It also ruined royal credit for years. The Third Anglo-Dutch War went badly and proved far more expensive than Charles II had anticipated. As a result, the king was forced to call a Parliament in February 1673.

Before even considering supply, it forced Charles II to rescind the Declaration of Indulgence and agree to the Test Act, requiring all officeholders to receive Anglican communion once a year. Dissenters could swallow their scruples and do so, a practice called “occasional conformity,” but Catholics would be committing mortal sin. The result was an exodus of Roman Catholics from government service, including Lord Treasurer Clifford and Lord High Admiral James, Duke of York. As a result, everyone now knew that the king’s brother and heir was a papist. Parliament forced the king to make peace with the Dutch in 1674. Charles II’s attempt to solve his problems with an absolutist domestic policy and a Catholic-French foreign policy was at an end.

Following the disasters of 1670–1672, Charles II sought to repair his reputation with the ruling elite by turning toward an Anglican constitutionalism. The architect of this policy was Thomas Osborne, Earl of Danby. Danby, knowing that the vast majority of the king’s subjects were Anglicans, sought to give the regime a more Anglican face. He appointed Anglican and Royalist gentlemen to central and local offices. He enforced the Clarendon Code against both Dissenters and Catholics. He insisted that the Duke of York’s two daughters, Mary and Anne, be raised as Anglicans and marry Protestants. (Anne married Prince George of Denmark; Mary married William of Orange.) The Dutch marriage, in particular became the linchpin of a Protestant, pro-Dutch foreign policy. It also reassured people that if the Catholic James succeeded to the throne, he would be succeeded in turn, by Protestants.

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**The Third  
Anglo-Dutch  
War went badly  
and proved far  
more expensive  
than Charles II  
had anticipated.**

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Danby sought to restore the financial credit of the regime. His attempt to hold the king to a budget ultimately failed. He was more successful at raising revenue. He continued the CABAL's successful reforms of the Customs, Excise and Hearth Tax. Customs revenues shot up because France and the Netherlands remained at war, thus allowing English merchants to move in on their trade. Danby also sought to make Parliament more compliant by pursuing Royalist-Anglican policies with which they agreed and by building up a "party" of reliable members by offering court offices, pensions, and favors to peers and MPs who voted with the king.

These strategies alarmed a group of peers and MPs, many with Dissenting sympathies and Roundhead pasts, led by Anthony Ashley Cooper, Earl of Shaftsbury. They formed a "country" bloc, that is, one claiming to represent the real wishes of the country, against Danby's "court" bloc. They attacked Danby's corruption of Parliament by bribes of office and other acts, which they believed tended toward absolutism. They attacked the extravagance of the court. They were virulently anti-Catholic but wanted to ease persecution of Dissenters. They feared the power of France and favored Danby's pro-Dutch foreign policy, but they trusted neither him nor the king to maintain it. They sought to maintain local autonomy in the countryside against what they saw as Danby's centralizing tendencies. Thus, on all five major areas of tension besetting the Stuart state, they opposed the king.

Despite the events of the early 1670s, Shaftsbury's country bloc remained a minority, within Parliament and without. They needed a more specific issue with which to convince the country that there really was an absolutist-Catholic conspiracy against the English constitution and the liberties of the subject. In the fall of 1678, they got their issue. ■

### Suggested Reading

Bucholz and Key, *Early Modern England*, chap. 9, secs. 4–5.

Coward, *Stuart Age*, chap. 9.

Kishlansky, *Monarchy Transformed*, chap. 10.

## Questions to Consider

1. Why did Charles II seek to please Dissenters and Catholics at the expense of Anglicans, who had been his father's staunchest supporters during the Civil Wars? Was his calculation purely political?
2. Shaftsbury and his country bloc argued that Danby's policies were corrupting the nation. Were they, or were they just good politics? Might they be both?

# The Failure of the Restoration: 1670–78

## Lecture 36—Transcript

In the last lecture, we saw that the Restoration settlements were as much an attempt to settle old scores left over from the Civil Wars as they were an attempt to turn back the clock to some idealized vision of early Stuart England. We also saw that Charles II was ill-fitted by his personality, his background, and his beliefs to be the constitutional king needed to make those settlements work, though it could be argued that his easygoing personality did a lot to promote post-war healing.

Charles II would make his unsuitability for being a constitutional monarch clear at the beginning of the second decade of his reign. That is, in the early 1670s, he would try to solve all of the problems left over from the Civil Wars in an absolutist and a Catholic direction with a series of bold gambles built on an alliance with the France of Louis XIV.

In the end, all these gambles would fail, forcing Charles II and his court to retreat into the appearance of a well-behaved constitutional Anglicanism under the leadership of a new first minister, the safely Anglican and fiscally conservative Thomas Osborne, Earl of Danby.

By the end of the decade and this lecture, it will appear that Charles II had finally learned to behave himself, but a bloc of “country” politicians under the Earl of Shaftsbury would remain convinced that it was all a ruse and that Charles II was really a secret Catholic absolutist at heart, planning another clandestine Popish Plot.

As we have seen, Charles II may have hankered after absolutism and perhaps Catholicism, but he couldn’t become an English Sun King so long as he depended upon Parliament for money. Without money, he couldn’t raise an army to enforce his will in the countryside. Since Parliament feared that that was precisely why he wanted money, they refused to vote it to him.

By 1667–1668, Charles II’s financial situation was beyond precarious. Trade was in decline thanks to the Great Plague of London of 1665, the Great Fire of London of 1666, and the Dutch burning the ships in the Medway in 1667.

As a result, the royal revenue was producing about £650,000 a year, a little over half of its projected yield. The disastrous Second Anglo-Dutch War added £1.5 million to the national debt.

The king's ministers did what they could. As early as 1662 (this is more research from my first book), the royal household abolished tables of hospitality at which household servants and gentle visitors could mooch a free meal. This saved Charles II about £30,000, although it also reduced the attractiveness and magnificence of his court.

In 1667, after the disaster of the Medway, the king established a Treasury commission to maximize revenue and cut his expenditure. These men asserted the Treasury's right to call for—and examine—departmental accounts, to modify the establishments of individual departments, and to direct how those departments spent their funds.

This may all seem very routine for governments today, but it was new in 1667–1668. These measures first established the principal that the Treasury was the driving agency of the English state. In other words, money makes the English state go round.

They also tried to reform the administrative system. They eliminated life tenures, the selling of offices, and old backlogs of accounts, and they sought to maximize the revenue. For example, they eliminated the farming of the customs. You may be shocked to learn that the English administrative system was so incompetent that for most of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, English kings had privatized the collection of customs in the ports. That is, a consortium of merchants would collect the customs for the king, the king would receive a set payment, and they would be able to keep any of the profits. In 1671, the government finally eliminated farming for direct collection.

Finally, in 1663, 1668, and 1676, the government went so far as to suspend the payment of all government salaries and pensions for one year. That's how desperate the king's financial situation was.

However, these measures by and large didn't work. Treasury reform and direct collection of the customs would take years to pay off. The attempts

to restrain royal expenditure all petered out when Charles II started making exceptions. First he made a few, then he made scores, and finally hundreds of people got their salaries paid during these supposed years of suspension.

The king was in a bind. Beginning around 1670, Charles II tried to solve his constitutional, fiscal, religious, foreign policy, and local government problems with a series of bold strokes. Specifically, Charles and the CABAL believed that the way out of the impasse was to form an alliance with France and its wealthy and powerful ruler, Louis XIV. To understand why they were tempted to do this, we have to take a quick tour of the situation in Western Europe circa 1670.

During the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, France recovered rapidly from the Thirty Years' War, and Louis XIV became the wealthiest and most powerful ruler in Europe. That will obtain almost until the end of this course. It will be a long time before we can leave Louis alone. He had solved, or was solving (at least from an English point of view it looked like he'd solved), the problems that plagued the Stuarts.

First, Louis was clearly sovereign in France. He ruled without the interference of any form of legislature. Second, he was a Catholic monarch in a Catholic country, though France officially tolerated the Protestant Huguenot minority. Louis would take care of that in 1685 by revoking that toleration originally granted by the Edict of Nantes. Huguenots would be forced to flee the country. Many of them came to England.

Third, Louis was fabulously wealthy, in part because he could tax his peasantry virtually at will. In France, as opposed to England, the nobility and clergy paid few taxes, so the peasantry really bore the brunt. That wealth enabled Louis to build the magnificent Palace of Versailles and also to pay an efficient bureaucracy in the localities, as well as maintain the biggest standing army in Europe.

Fourth, the bureaucracy enabled Louis to impose his will on the localities without much reference to the aristocracy, whom he kept an eye on at court. If the locals should ever get feisty, there was always the army that could get turned on them.



I should qualify all this by telling you that French historians now question how effective and complete the king's control really was. They've qualified everything that I have just said, but the point is that from the point of view of England—from the point of view of Charles II—Louis looks like he's solved all the problems facing Early-modern monarchy.

Because the French people were in fact remarkably well behaved, at least compared to the English in the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Louis was able to use his army to pursue an aggressive foreign policy in Europe. In fact, in 1670, just as Charles is looking for friends, Louis XIV is looking for allies to support his wildest scheme yet: the conquest of the Spanish Empire.

In the 1670s, I must remind you that Spain still ruled a vast empire. This included the Spanish Netherlands—that's roughly equivalent to modern day Belgium, and you must distinguish it from the independent Dutch republic to the north. Spain ruled southern Italy, most of Central and South America, and the Philippines, which in fact had been named after Philip II.

But as this implies, Spain was dangerously overextended. All this territory had to be defended. In fact, they'd already lost the Protestant Netherlands, the Dutch Republic, by the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. They also lost Portugal in 1640.

Spain's involvement in the Wars of Religion, culminating in the Thirty Years' War, had left its royal Treasury deeply in debt and its military forces weak. In short, by the 1670s, Spain was a rotting hulk of an empire—the sick man of Europe, ruled by a sick man. Since 1665, Spain had been ruled by the sickly and mentally incompetent Carlos II. Carlos was something of a walking medical experiment, for he was the product of centuries of Habsburg interbreeding. Remember that it was part of the Habsburg's strategy to conserve their lands to intermarry with each other. This had built up the empires of Charles V and Philip II, but it was a genetic disaster. Centuries of marrying cousins had produced Carlos.

Among the highlights of his medical history, he was unable to stand unaided until his fourth year. He took seven years to learn how to walk. His jaw was

deformed, which made the simple act of chewing food an ordeal. He was mentally impaired and almost certainly impotent.

It's part of the theology of Early-modern kingship that kings embody the nation, and no king better embodied the state of his empire than Carlos did. Since Carlos was congenitally incapable of producing an heir, the Spanish throne and empire would be up for grabs when he died. Somebody new—a new royal family—would inherit the kingdom and empire of Spain.

Louis's position, bolstered by his marriage to a Spanish princess, was simple: Why not Louis? His goal was to combine French military power with the wealth of Spain's overseas possessions. The result would be the greatest empire the world had ever seen.

He took his first step towards that goal in 1667, when his army swept into the Spanish Netherlands, taking them away from Spain. Remember, this is modern day Belgium. Obviously, Louis's dream was Protestant Europe's worst nightmare. The Dutch Republic, right on the border of the Spanish Netherlands (now the French-Spanish Netherlands), and its leader, or stadtholder, William of Orange, in particular realized the danger.

Remember that the Dutch were the only major republican and Protestant state on the continent west of the Rhine. They clearly saw that they had to maintain a balance of power against Louis XIV. Louis XIV is the greatest threat to their peace. William of Orange's point of view is that if Spain and France ever combined, that would be the end of Protestantism in Europe, so he sought to create a Grand Alliance against Louis and Bourbon-Catholic domination of Europe.

What this means, in a funny sort of way, is that the road to Spain goes through the Netherlands. That is, Louis knows that if he ever invades Spain, he's going to get an invasion in his back door from the Dutch, so he's got to eliminate them as a threat. By the early 1670s, Louis was planning a war to wipe the Dutch off the map. In the words of his finance minister, Jean Baptiste Colbert, "It is impossible that his majesty should tolerate any longer the insolence and arrogance of that nation."

All through the 1670s, Louis had conquered territories around the Netherlands, trying to isolate them from other European countries, but now he was ready for the big show and he's looking for friends. Both sides, in fact, would like to be friends with Charles II, in particular because he has the Royal Navy.

In fact, the English people were torn over these issues. They didn't much like the Dutch, but the French were an ancestral enemy and they were Catholic. The main problem with the Dutch was that they were rivals in trade. Old Parliamentarians, in particular, concluded that it was Catholic and absolutist France that was the greatest danger to Protestantism in England, so they were very surprised and not a little alarmed when, in 1670, Charles II and the CABAL signed the Treaty of Dover with Louis XIV.

The Treaty of Dover was a bold diplomatic step. Its terms were as follows. Charles's British kingdoms (England, Scotland, and Ireland) would form an alliance with Louis's France in a war against the Dutch Republic. Louis would supply Charles with a subsidy of about £225,000, which would mean that Charles wouldn't have to call a Parliament to criticize this war.

There was also a secret provision of the treaty. Charles promised to publicly convert to Roman Catholicism and reconcile his kingdoms to Rome. In return, if he did this, Louis would supply an additional £150,000 and troops if Protestant England rebelled, as it almost certainly would.

Historians have debated the religious provisions of the Treaty of Dover ever since. Was Charles really a secret Catholic? Why would he promise a policy that was sure to provoke rebellion? The best guess is that Charles is basically telling Louis anything Louis wants to hear in order to get more money and cement the friendship.

In any case, each side got what it wanted. Louis acquired a valuable ally, the Royal Navy in particular, in his struggle against the Dutch. With Louis's money, Charles would solve all of his problems—his constitutional, fiscal, religious, foreign policy, and local government problems—at one stroke.

First, he could send Parliament home because he had money. Second, he had money, so he could raise an army. Third, he could wreak vengeance on the Dutch for the humiliations of the Second War, the one in which they sailed up the Medway. Fourth, he could grant religious toleration. Fifth, if the locals gave him any trouble—if his local elite rebelled—he could use the army that he had bought in order to put them down.

In 1672, Charles II acted. He began in March by issuing a proclamation suspending penalties against both Dissenters and Catholics. This is known as the Declaration of Indulgence. He's doing this first to demonstrate his good faith to Louis on the Catholic issue, and partly because he's also a very tolerant man. He wants an indulgence. He wants the penal laws not to be enforced. Could he get away with it?

What Charles is doing is trying to ally with both religious extremes in England against the middle. He's granting Dissenters freedom of worship, and he's granting Catholics freedom of worship. What he's hoping is that they'll combine. The Dissenters will be so happy that they are now free of the penalties of the Cavalier Code that they won't notice that the Catholics have sneaked in as well.

In fact, Dissenters thought this was too high a price to pay. That is to say, they didn't want any part of a toleration if it included Catholics. Both Dissenters and Catholics felt that this was all part of a plot to restore Catholicism a la Bloody Mary.

The king's next action, in order to provide additional money for the war, was to suspend payments on his debt. In other words, in the Stop of the Exchequer of 1672, Charles II declared a temporary bankruptcy. He stopped paying. That way, he could take what money he had and use it for the war. This naturally ruined numerous merchants and bankers who'd loaned money to the Crown. More importantly, it ruined the credit of the Crown for decades.

Here we have a situation where Charles is really engaging in a gamble. He's got to win or else there will be real problems.

In fact, the Third Anglo-Dutch War went badly and proved far more expensive than Charles II had anticipated. As a result, the king was forced to recall the Cavalier Parliament in February 1673. Parliament met in an angry mood. How many times have I said that in this course, particularly under the Stuarts?

Before even considering supply, it forced Charles II to rescind his Declaration of Indulgence and agree to the Test Act. The Test Act required all officeholders to deny transubstantiation on oath and to receive Anglican communion once a year. Note who this is directed against. It's directed against both Dissenters and Catholics, but especially Catholics. A Dissenter could swallow his scruples, receive Anglican communion once a year, and be done with it, but no good Catholic could take Anglican communion. It would be a mortal sin.

As a result, the Test Act smoked out many Catholics in government. It turned out that Lord Treasurer Clifford was a Catholic and had to resign. Much more ominously, it also turned out that the Lord High Admiral of England, James, Duke of York, was a Catholic. He had to resign, too. That's really scary because everyone knew that the king had no son and that James, Duke of York, was going to be the next king.

This was a shock to the nation. It looks as if there's a huge Catholic plot to subvert the constitution at home just as Louis XIV and Charles II seem to be trying to extirpate Protestantism abroad. Parliament forced the king to make peace with the Dutch in 1674 and to dismiss most of his ministry.

Charles II's bold attempt to solve the five problems left over from the Civil Wars by pursuing an alliance with France was wrecked. To old Parliamentarians, the situation only confirmed their oldest fears: Popery and the French reemerge as England's greatest foes, not the Dutch. The king and the royal family stood revealed not only as pro-Catholic and pro-French, but fiscally and militarily incompetent. The only saving grace for Charles out of this whole fiasco was that the secret provisions of the Treaty of Dover remained secret—at least for now.

In the meantime, the king needed to mend fences and repair his reputation. Following the disasters of 1670–1672, Charles II did this in effect by surrendering to the Anglican majority on the five great issues. That is, he turned toward a kind of Anglican constitutionalism. The architect of that policy was a new minister, Thomas Osborne, Earl of Danby.

Danby started out as the conservative Anglican Yorkshire baronet Sir Thomas Osborne. He came to government as a client of the CABAL. He became an MP in 1665 and Treasurer of the Navy in 1671. Here he came to the king's attention because he was very competent, and he had some financial ability. That was, of course, very much at a premium at the court of Charles II.

Between 1672 and 1674, Charles II named him first Lord Osborne, then Lord Treasurer of England, and finally Earl of Danby (from now on that's what I'll call him). Danby knew that the vast majority of the king's subjects—both gentle and common—were Anglicans, so he sought to give the regime a more Anglican face. First, he appointed Anglican and Royalist gentlemen to offices of the center and then the localities. He really enforced the Test Act and Clarendon Code. In fact, he encouraged the persecution of both Dissenters and Catholics. Catholics paid their fines as recusants, dissenting meetings were broken up, and many Dissenters ended up in prison. It's not a good time to be a Dissenter. This pleased the bishops, the House of Lords, and the Anglican country gentlemen in the localities.

Above all, Danby looked ahead. Remember that I told you that the next king of England was likely to be the Catholic James, Duke of York. Fortunately for good Protestants, James had children by his first wife, Anne Hyde, Duchess of York, who had recently died. Those children were Princess Mary and Princess Anne. Danby insisted that Mary and Anne be raised as Anglicans over their father's objections, and that they marry Protestants. Do you see how this would allay the fears of the country gentry? They'd know all we have to do is survive James's reign and we'll get Protestants.

In 1677, Mary married her cousin, William of Orange. We just met him as the first Protestant in Europe. He's a cousin because he's descended from a daughter of Charles I on his mother's side. They're actually very close. This actually added to the Grand Alliance.

In 1683, Anne married Prince George of Denmark, who had distinguished himself as a soldier and a fervent Protestant. You may also remember that Charles II, however, found “nothing in him.”

It was the Dutch marriage, in particular, that became the lynchpin of a Protestant, pro-Dutch foreign policy. In other words, the Dutch marriage assured people that if Charles II died and was succeeded by James, James would in turn be succeeded by the Protestant Mary and her husband, the safest Protestant of all, William of Orange. You could argue that the match between William and Mary was the most fateful marriage in English history since those of Henry VIII—take your pick which one.

There was just one little catch. I told you that Mary and Anne’s mother had died. Early in the 1670s, James remarries. He marries a Portuguese princess by the name of Mary Beatrice. (I’m sorry for so many Marys; I’ll always call her “Mary Beatrice.”) Mary Beatrice was, of course, a young wife. If James and Mary Beatrice had children, and if Danby wasn’t around to make them raise those children as Protestants, there might be a new succession.

Fortunately (in the eyes of many Protestants), Mary Beatrice proved to have an unhappy obstetrical history. It looked like no heir would come from that marriage and so the marriage of William and Mary looked to be a sure thing for the future.

Danby’s next task was to restore the financial credit of the regime. The government never paid off the debts from the Stop of the Exchequer, but Danby did try to cut expenditure and raise revenue. Unfortunately, his attempt to hold the king to a budget failed, mostly torpedoed by Charles’s lack of resolve and the demands of courtiers and mistresses.

Let me give just one example, that of Charles’s generosity to his favorite mistress, the Countess of Castlemaine (from 1670, Duchess of Cleveland). He rewarded this woman. The wages of sin included her salary as a lady of the queen’s bedchamber of at least £200 a year. That’s right. Charles II forced his wife to accept his favorite mistress as a lady in waiting. That must have made for some rather uncomfortable dressings. He also paid her £10,000 a year out of the customs revenue, £10,000 out of the beer and ale

excise, £5,000 a year out of the post office (every time you mailed a letter, you were paying off the Countess of Castlemaine), and £1,000 a year out of first fruits and tenths, which was a tax that was taken from parishioners and used to go to the pope. Now it was going in a rather different direction.

He also paid individual debts for the Countess that ranged up to £30,000. These were mostly gambling debts. There were also grants of royal lands and the right to dispose of and sell places in the customs, though since she was getting customs revenue, she had to be very careful not to pick the wrong people.

Remember that Castlemaine was only the most prominent of an army of mistresses, favorites, courtiers, and household servants—all of whom had their hands in Charles's pockets.

Danby was more successful at raising revenue. He continued the CABAL's reforms of the Customs, Excise and Hearth Tax, and he got lucky. Remember that customs revenues are a major source of income for the king. Remember (you don't know this yet) that the French and Dutch continue fighting. That means while they're engaged in war, the English can take over their trade, so there's a trade boom. In fact, this is the beginning of a commercial revolution that will make England the greatest trading nation in Europe by the end of the decade. Nobody knows that yet, but it means that the king's coffers are finally filling.

Finally, Danby tried to make Parliament more compliant to the king's will. He did this in two ways. First, he pursued Royalist-Anglican policies. He pursued policies that Parliament would like, since most of these people are Royalist-Anglicans (remember, it's the Cavalier Parliament). Secondly, he tried to build up a bloc of reliable court members, both peers and MPs. In other words, if you vote for the king, he gives you an office. He gives you a pension. He pays you money out of the secret service. He gives favors to anybody who'll support the king in Parliament. Danby's critics charged that what he was doing was undermining the constitution. He's bribing members of Parliament to build up a court "party." In fact, historians now know that Charles II didn't have enough money to buy that many members, and it



turns out that the ones he bought were still pretty unreliable in terms of how they voted.

As a result, Danby and the king still have to toe an Anglican line. Nevertheless, these policies and practices alarmed old Parliamentarians, particularly old Roundheads, in particular from them a group of peers and MPs. Many of them were Dissenters, and many of them had Roundhead pasts. The group was led by a former member of the CABAL named Anthony Ashley Cooper, Earl of Shaftsbury. Shaftsbury will be important for the next couple of lectures.

This group formed a “country” bloc against the “court” bloc. That is to say, they claimed to represent the real values of the country. They claimed to be in a sense more of a sort of grass roots or populist movement. They attacked Danby’s corruption of Parliament by bribes of office, which they felt tended towards absolutism. They attacked the extravagance of the court: all those payments to the Countess of Castlemaine. They were virulently anti-Catholic, but wanted to ease the persecution of Dissenters. They’re sympathetic with Dissenters. They feared the absolute power of France and favored Danby’s pro-Dutch foreign policy. In fact, they didn’t trust either Danby or the king to maintain it.

Finally, the country bloc sought to maintain local autonomy in the countryside. They didn’t want the government interfering in their individual affairs, and they saw Danby as increasing central control. In other words, on all five major areas of tension besetting the Stuart state, this group under Shaftsbury opposed the king. In the country view, far from being defeated by the fiasco of 1672–1673, Charles II and his chief minister had learned to manipulate the system behind the scenes. Under cover of an Anglican respectability, royal power seemed to be growing and that only contributed to a revival of old fears.

In 1677, Andrew Marvell, the poet, wrote *Account of the Growth of Popery and Arbitrary Government*, the argument of which should be obvious, in which he charged that, “There has now for diverse years a design been carried on to change the lawful government of England into

an absolute tyranny and to convert the established Protestant religion into downright popery.”

Old Parliamentarians saw Danby’s Anglicanism as a cover for the creation of an absolute Catholic state. Still, that doesn’t mean that everybody bought the argument. In fact, Shaftsbury’s country bloc was a minority. Most people didn’t buy them. Most people were pretty happy with Danby and his Anglicanism.

Remember that those country members were old Roundheads. They were still associated with king-killing, political anarchy, and iconoclastic Puritan narrow-mindedness. What they needed was a specific issue with which to convince the English people that there really was an absolutist Catholic conspiracy against the English constitution and the liberties of the subjects. They would get their issue in the summer of 1678.

In this lecture, we witnessed Charles II’s bold attempt to solve his sovereignty, money, religious, foreign policy, and local control problems by pursuing friendship with Louis XIV. The resultant royal initiatives to grant religious toleration, repudiate the royal debt, and attack the Dutch Republic all proved disastrous by 1672.

As a result, Charles II was forced to backtrack and turn towards the majority of the country. He had to embrace an Anglican constitutionalism and the policies of Thomas Osborne, Earl of Danby. These policies got him off the hook for awhile, but country politicians noted that when Charles II behaved himself, he gained more power at the expense of the issues they cared about (parliamentary independence, its say in royal finance and foreign policy) and the groups they cared about (the Dissenters).

Still, the country as a whole did not—by and large—believe their charge that there was a vast right wing conspiracy to bring in absolutism and Catholicism—at least not until the summer of 1678. In August 1678, a defrocked Anglican clergyman named Titus Oates approached the Privy Council with word of a Popish Plot to kill the king and put his Catholic brother, James, on the throne. The country bloc now had its issue: The Popish Plot would be the great crisis of Charles II’s reign.

# The Popish Plot and Exclusion: 1678–85

## Lecture 37

**Rumors flew. Catholics were said to be arming themselves. There were bombs in Protestant churches. There were “nightriders”—that is, Catholic spies—roving the countryside. Every time somebody heard a horse flying by at night, they assumed it must have been Catholic plotters. There were rumors of French and Spanish troops landing on the coasts. In fact, Oates’s story was a tissue of lies. There was no Popish Plot.**

**I**n the late summer of 1678, a defrocked preacher named Titus Oates approached the Privy Council with word of a Jesuit plot to assassinate Charles II, place his brother James on the throne, raise English and Irish Catholics, and bring over a French army to restore Roman Catholicism as the national Church. To their credit, neither king nor Council believed a word—at first.

Oates was not a credible witness. Starting out life as a Dissenter, he had also tried the Church of England and the Jesuits. He had been expelled from the Merchant Tailors’ School and two Cambridge colleges, two Anglican livings, the Royal Navy, and two Jesuit colleges. His offenses ranged from lying to drunkenness to sodomy. His accusations were taken seriously only after the discovery of three terrible coincidences by the end of 1678:

- James’s former secretary, Edward Coleman, was found to have corresponded with the court of France about reestablishing Catholicism.
- Sir Edmund Berry Godfrey, the JP who had taken down Oates’s story, was found dead in a ditch. The murder, if it was murder, has never been solved. But contemporaries had no trouble attributing it to Catholics.

- Lord Treasurer Danby was found to have been negotiating with Louis XIV for more subsidies so that Charles II would not have to face a Parliament.

The result was an explosion of national hysteria, fear, and hostility toward Catholics. Rumors flew of Catholic plots and French and Spanish troops landing on the coasts. In fact, there was no Popish Plot.

English Catholics represented less than 1 percent of the population and had sought peace and quiet for years. But English Protestants still feared a Catholic heir (James), Catholics at court (Catherine of Braganza and her circle), and Catholic France on the move in Europe. This played off ancient memories of Bloody Mary, the Spanish Armada of 1588, the Gunpowder Plot of 1605, the Irish Rebellion of 1641, the Great Fire of London of 1666 (which the government had blamed, cynically, on Catholics), and the Treaty of Dover of 1670. Prominent Catholics were arrested and charged with treason in kangaroo trials. About two dozen were executed.

At the end of 1678, Charles II tried to save Danby from impeachment and avoid a parliamentary inquiry into the secret provisions of the Treaty of Dover, by dissolving Parliament. This was a mistake, because it gave Shaftsbury and his country bloc the opportunity to go to the country with a real issue (Catholics in government) and a platform: the exclusion of James, Duke of York, from succession. Over the next two years, Shaftsbury's country followers evolved into the first real political party in English history. Because many came from old Roundhead families, they were dubbed "Whigs" (a cant term for Scottish Presbyterian rebels) by their enemies. Whigs ran on a platform of excluding James from the throne, by statute, as a Roman Catholic, and Parliament naming as the king's successor his eldest illegitimate son, James, Duke of Monmouth. As this implies, they favored the rights of Parliament over those of the king; they attacked the extravagance of the court; they favored emancipation for Dissenters but harsh persecution of Catholics; and they favored a pro-Dutch, anti-French foreign policy. Though popular with the mercantile community, they claimed to represent "country" values. In short, Whigs feared an international conspiracy to render England an absolutist, Catholic state.

During the three exclusion elections (1679–1681), the Whigs pioneered many techniques of modern political parties. They founded political dining societies, where party strategy was planned. They capitalized on the temporary expiration of the Licensing Act by commissioning pamphlets, poems, and other propaganda. They organized mass rallies and pope-burning processions on Protestant anniversaries, such as Gunpowder Treason Day (5 November) and Queen Elizabeth’s Accession Day (17 November).

The Whigs won all three exclusion elections in landslides. This presented Charles II with a dilemma. He could give in to the Whigs, abandon his brother—and much of the royal prerogative—and live a quiet life. Or he could stick by James at the risk of uncooperative Parliaments and even another civil war. Charles decided to bide his time, waiting for a reaction in favor of the royal family.

The Whig appeal to the rights of Parliament, the press, and the people did produce a reaction among conservatives. Old Royalists and courtiers came together to support the king and the Duke of York. Their political party was dubbed “Tory” (slang for Irish-Catholic bandits) by their detractors. Tories ran on a platform of safeguarding the hereditary succession in the person of James, Duke of York, whatever his religion. As this implies, they favored the rights of the king over those of Parliament; they would not deny the king funds; they favored the monopoly of the Anglican Church as the only legal religion in England. Though they had little love for Catholics, they saw the real danger to English life coming from radical Dissenters. The Tories had no quarrel with Louis XIV and, thus, favored a pro-French, anti-Dutch foreign policy. Their values were those of the court. Tories also learned to organize, copying and extending Whig techniques. Eventually, the country came around to their point of view.

The Exclusion Parliaments were the products of Whig landslides. The first Exclusion Parliament met in the spring of 1679. When the Whigs proposed a bill excluding James from the throne, the king dissolved it. The elections to the second Exclusion Parliament took place in the late summer of 1679, but the king, hoping to buy time for a Tory reaction, postponed its first meeting until October 1680. The second Exclusion Bill failed when it was defeated in the Lords. The third Exclusion Parliament was convened in Oxford in March

1681. When the king dissolved it at the end of the month, he was sure that the country had come round to his side.

By 1681, it was pretty clear that there never had been a plot to kill the king. Thanks to effective Tory propaganda, it was the Whigs who now seemed the chief danger to Church and State. From this point, Charles II pursued what came to be called the Tory Revenge. Like his father, Charles II had chosen to rule without Parliament. But unlike his father, he realized that that condition might not be permanent. To ensure Tory success in the next election, the king used the Corporation Act to revoke city charters, purge their corporations of Whigs and Dissenters, and replace them with loyal Tories. These men launched a sweeping persecution of Dissenters.

These initiatives ensured quiet in the countryside now and a Tory landslide in any future election. Charles II began to live within his means, cutting his expenditure and benefiting from a trade boom that increased his revenue to £1.4 million a year. Finally realizing that most of the ruling elite were Anglican-Royalist Tories, he publicly embraced Anglicanism and appointed safe Anglican politicians and clergymen to positions of authority. The Anglican clergy responded by preaching loyalty from the pulpits. These policies left the Whigs frustrated and bereft of their most effective forum: Parliament. Shaftsbury fled to the Netherlands in 1682 and died the following year. In 1683, radical Whig plans were discovered to kill Charles and James. The ensuing prosecutions broke the party.

Charles II succumbed to a stroke on 6 February 1685 after a deathbed conversion to Roman Catholicism. Despite this unpopular move, he left his successor a prosperous country, a full Treasury, a loyal national Church, an opposition Whig party in disarray, and a local government firmly in the hands of dedicated Tories. Unfortunately, he left all these things to his brother James. ■

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## Suggested Reading

Bucholz and Key, *Early Modern England*, chap. 9, sec. 6–7.

Coward, *Stuart Age*, chaps. 10–11.

Kenyon, *Popish Plot*.

Kishlansky, *Monarchy Transformed*, chap. 10.

## Questions to Consider

1. Why did most people believe so readily in a Popish Plot? Why did Charles II not believe it?
2. Why did the Whigs think that Charles II would eventually embrace exclusion? Why did he choose not to do so?

# The Popish Plot and Exclusion: 1678–85

## Lecture 37—Transcript

In the last lecture, we saw that by the 1670s, Charles II had achieved an understanding with the Anglican-Royalist court majority of the ruling elite. Under the tutelage of the Earl of Danby, he learned to accommodate his political and religious desires to the reality of what they would put up with.

This had the ironic effect of actually giving him more freedom than one might expect on the five great issues of the civil wars. Very few people realized this. Only the Earl of Shaftsbury and his country bloc knew it. They feared that it was all a scheme to make Charles and Danby absolute in the state and to introduce Catholicism back into English religious life.

No one was buying that interpretation until August 1678. In that month, the country learned of an alleged Popish Plot to kill the king and establish his Catholic brother James, Duke of York, on the throne. The ensuing national hysteria led to a constitutional crisis, the rise of the Whig and Tory parties, and an attempt by the former to bar James from the throne in what came to be known as the Exclusion Crisis.

The lecture concludes with the failure of exclusion, the Tory revenge of Charles II's last years, and the peaceful accession of his brother, James II.

In the late summer of 1678, a defrocked preacher named Titus Oates approached the Privy Council with word of a Jesuit plot to assassinate Charles II, place his brother James on the throne, raise English and Irish Catholics, and bring over a French army to restore the old Church as the national Church.

To their credit, neither the king nor his Council believed a word of it—at first. Titus Oates was not exactly a monument of credibility. He started out life as a Dissenter. He had also tried the Church of England and the Jesuits. He'd been expelled from the Merchant Tailors' School and two Cambridge Colleges, two Anglican livings, the Royal Navy, and two Jesuit seminaries. His offenses ranged from lying to drunkenness to what contemporaries called sodomy. Why should anyone buy anything from Titus Oates?



His accusations were only taken seriously after the discovery of three terrible coincidences at the end of 1678. First, James's former secretary, Edward Coleman, was found to have corresponded secretly with the court of France about reestablishing Catholicism.

Second, Sir Edmund Berry Godfrey, the JP who had taken down Oates's story, was found dead in a ditch. The evidence for foul play is ambiguous. Godfrey's body was found on 17 October 1678 (on Primrose Hill) run through with a sword and with abrasions about the neck, but there was no blood, so he was not stabbed. The abrasions were too low on the neck to be a hanging. They might be evidence of strangulation, but his valuables were all still on his person, so this wasn't a robbery.

In addition, the body had clearly been moved. It was dry, despite recent rains. The murder—if it was murder—has never been solved. It's one of the great murder mysteries of English history along with the little princes in the Tower and Jack the Ripper.

For contemporaries, there was no mystery. Clearly, it was the Catholics that did it. Of course, if you stop and think about it, it makes no sense that the Catholics would kill this JP after the cat is out of the bag. This would only make their lives worse, but contemporaries weren't thinking clearly in the fall of 1678. Suddenly, people took Oates's story seriously.

Finally, at the very end of the year, the supposedly arch-Anglican and anti-French Lord Treasurer Danby was found to have been negotiating with Louis XIV for a subsidy so that Charles II wouldn't have to call a Parliament. The result was an explosion of fear and national hysteria toward Catholics. Rumors flew. Catholics were said to be arming themselves. There were bombs in Protestant churches. There were "nightriders"—that is, Catholic spies—roving the countryside. Every time somebody heard a horse flying by at night, they assumed it must have been Catholic plotters. There were rumors of French and Spanish troops landing on the coasts.

In fact, Oates's story was a tissue of lies. There was no Popish Plot. English Catholics represented less than one percent of the population, and they'd been seeking peace and quiet for years. English Protestants still feared a Catholic

heir (James), Catholics at court in the person of Catherine of Braganza and her priests, and Catholic France in the person of Louis XIV on the move in Europe. All of this, of course, played off ancient memories of Bloody Mary; the northern Ridolfi and Babington plots of the 1560s, 1570s, and 1580s; the Spanish Armada in 1588; the Gunpowder Plot of 1605; the Irish Rebellion of 1641; and the Great Fire of London of 1666, which the government had cynically blamed on the Catholics, rather than the royal baker. Finally, there was the memory of the Treaty of Dover of 1670.

Shaftsbury and his country bloc suddenly are vindicated. As a result, Catholic houses were searched. Catholics were forbidden the court. London streets were blocked off. The trained bands and the militia were called out. London is under a state of virtual martial law. Prominent Catholics were arrested and charged with high treason in kangaroo trials. Judges admitted hearsay evidence and ridiculed defense witnesses. It's an old truism that during periods of national emergency and hysteria, constitutional protections go out the window.

Overall, about two-dozen innocent people were executed, either for supposed complicity in the plot or for officiating as priests. Many were later canonized, beatified, or made venerable by the Roman Catholic Church.

Even the queen was accused of trying to poison the king. To his credit, Charles II scoffed at this, and stood by the woman whom he had so often abandoned, despite the fact that her removal would have solved all his problems. He would have been able to remarry and possibly have an heir who would not be the Catholic James. Charles II may have had Henry VIII's libido, but he did not possess that monarch's ruthless opportunism or blood lust.

At the end of 1678, Charles did panic a bit. He tried to save Danby from impeachment and avoid a parliamentary inquiry into the secret provisions. He's always worried that Parliament is going to find out about the secret provisions of the Treaty of Dover, which is the real Popish Plot of course, so he dissolves Parliament. He sends the Cavalier Parliament home for good. That was a mistake—for a dissolution, as opposed to a prorogation, necessitates an election for a new Parliament.

The election gave Shaftsbury and his country bloc the opportunity to go to the country with a real issue—Catholics in government—and a legislative goal: the exclusion of James, Duke of York, from the succession. The Exclusion Crisis had begun. We move from Popish Plot to Exclusion Crisis.

In the course of three elections, Shaftsbury and his country followers evolved into the first real political party in English history—indeed, arguably the first real political party in European history. In part because many came from old Roundhead families, these people were therefore perceived as old radicals. The word that was applied to them by their enemies was an old word for Scottish Presbyterian rebels: “Whig.” The name Whig stuck.

Whigs ran on a platform of excluding James from the throne as a Roman Catholic by parliamentary statute. In his place, they would propose as successor the king’s illegitimate Protestant son, James, Duke of Monmouth. We’ll hear about him again later.

As this implies, Whigs favored the rights of Parliament over those of the king. Consequently, they favored limitations on the power of the king, and they opposed a standing army, so there’s their position on sovereignty. As this implies, they were anti-court, so they attacked royal extravagance; there’s their position on finance. Clearly, they were anti-Catholic; there’s their religious position. Whigs favored emancipation for Dissenters, but harsh persecution for papists. Thus, they would repeal the Cavalier Code as it applied to Dissenters, but strengthen the penal laws against Catholics.

Since Catholicism was an international movement, the Whigs favored a pro-Dutch, anti-French foreign policy. Finally, though popular with the mercantile community, where dissent was strong, they claimed to represent “country” values—the values of the English landowner.

In short, the Whigs stood firm against what they perceived as an international Catholic conspiracy to render England an absolutist Catholic state. During the three exclusion elections, which took place between 1679 and 1681, the Whigs pioneered many of the techniques of modern political parties. They founded political dining societies where party strategy was planned. The most famous of these was the Green Ribbon Club. Green is the color

of Whiggery, which doesn't actually make a lot of sense according to our present color scheme.

They capitalized on the temporary expiration of the Licensing Act by commissioning pamphlets, poems, and other propaganda. Writers like John Locke (who was a protégé of Shaftsbury's) and Algernon Sidney argued against the idea that authority came directly from God. Therefore, the hereditary succession was not sacred. They revived the Leveller idea that power came from the people in a sort of contract to protect their lives, liberty, and property. I should tell you that because they represented landowners, they were careful to define "the people" as those who owned property.

Once a ruler failed to protect the lives, liberty, and property of his subjects, as in Whig eyes Charles was failing to do, the contract was broken. This justified Parliament altering the succession and even revolution if necessary. If these ideas sound familiar to you, it's perhaps because you've read John Locke. He actually wrote his two treatises of government at this time in support of exclusion, but he was afraid to publish for reasons that will become obvious later in the lecture.

To get their message out, the Whig Green Ribbon Club organized mass rallies and pope burning processions on Protestant anniversaries, most notably on 5 November, Gunpowder Treason Day, and the Accession Day of Queen Elizabeth, 17 November. There were big Whig anti-Catholic festivals at which the entire hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church, from Jesuits on up to the pontiff, would be burned in effigy in London.

These methods were effective. The Whigs won all three exclusion elections in landslides. This presented Charles II with an immense problem. He found Whig ideas abhorrent, of course, but he couldn't ignore their popularity. He could give into the Whigs. To do that he'd have to abandon his brother, but he didn't actually much care for James. He'd have to abandon his wife, but we've already seen how he cared for her. He would have to abandon the royal prerogative, which he did care about. He would have the chance to embrace his son, whom he clearly loved, and live a quiet life—just let the Whigs win, determine the succession, and run the country.

Or he could stick by James and the Stuart vision of monarchy, at the risk of uncooperative Parliaments, another civil war, and maybe having to go on his travels again. He decided to stick with the Stuart view of monarchy. Like his father in 1640–1642, Charles decided to bide his time, make some concessions that he didn't really believe in, and hope for a Royalist reaction.

In March 1679, he sent James out of the country, first to Brussels, and then in October to Scotland to administer it, which James did ruthlessly. That would be a harbinger of the future. In March, he named some Whigs, including Shaftsbury, to the Privy Council. He waited, hoping that his moderation and reasonableness would contrast with Whig extremism and so produce a Royalist reaction in the country. You remember that Charles I had pretty much followed the same strategy in 1641.

Charles II was not to be disappointed. Eventually, the Whig appeal to the rights of Parliament, the press, and the people produced a reaction among conservatives, who of course wanted no part of those ideas. Old Royalists and courtiers came together to support the king and Duke of York. Since they were therefore perceived as being soft on Catholics, their political party was dubbed "Tory." That was contemporary slang for an Irish-Catholic bandit, so they were named Tories by their detractors. Both parties were named by the other side.

Tories ran on a platform of safeguarding the hereditary succession in the person of James, Duke of York, whatever his religion. As this implies, they favored the rights of the king over those of Parliament. While they conceded the necessity of Parliaments, they believed that the lesson of the civil wars was that only a strong king could guarantee order. Because kings were chosen by God and because Parliaments were subordinate to kings, no one could tamper with the hereditary succession.

Nor would they deny the king funds. Here's their position on finance; I've just told you their position on sovereignty. In terms of religion, they wanted the Anglican Church to remain the only legal religious establishment in England. They didn't much love Catholics, but they saw the real danger to English life coming from radical Dissenters, whom they would point out had actually managed to kill the last king. "You're worried about Catholics?"

There's only one time that a king was judicially murdered in England, and it was you people, not us."

Therefore, they wanted to maintain and strengthen the Cavalier Code. In terms of foreign policy, they had no quarrel with Louis XIV. They saw the Dutch as trading rivals. Therefore, they favored a pro-French, anti-Dutch foreign policy. Their values were those of the court, in the sort of court versus country conflict.

Although the Tories abhorred appealing to the masses—think about their basic philosophy—they soon learned to organize, copying and extending Whig techniques. There were Tory clubs, Tory demonstrations and processions. There's really no one as evocative to burn as the pope, but they would burn a figure named "Jack Presbyter." This was kind of a raving lunatic Puritan that they would have fun burning.

They too commissioned propaganda and used the Anglican pulpit—they had the Church of England on their side—to emphasize that all authority came from God and that only God could revoke it. Rebellion was never justified in their view. Instead, when a king was bad, all his subjects could do was endure patiently and practice passive obedience and non-resistance. As the civil wars proved, the alternative (the Bishop of Carlisle's disorder, fear, and mutiny) was far worse.

Eventually, the country came round to the Tory point of view, but it took awhile. In the meantime, the Exclusion Parliaments met. I'm going to turn the clock back a few months and give you what happened in these three Parliaments. Remember, they're all the products of Whig landslides.

The first Exclusion Parliament met in the spring of 1679. When the Whigs proposed a bill excluding James from the throne, the king prorogued it, and then dissolved it. That just meant another election. You see, like Charles I, he's got the problem that he's always got to call Parliament, especially since his financial situation remains poor.

The elections to the Second Exclusion Parliament took place in the late summer of 1679. The king, hoping to buy time for a Tory reaction, postponed

its first meeting for almost a year, until October 1680. It was at this point that the pope burnings, processions, and public demonstrations on the part of the Whigs really heat up. They're trying to use popular opinion to put pressure on the king to let that Parliament sit.

When it did, the Second Exclusion bill failed in the Lords. It passed the Commons but it didn't get out of the Lords. The House of Lords usually had a higher proportion of royal servants—people with jobs in the royal household—people the king could count on.

Then the king dissolved the Parliament. At this point, the tensions were so high that many people felt that civil war loomed. The king was resisting the clear will of the country, but he also thought that he could detect the beginnings of a Royalist reaction that he'd been waiting for.

The Third Exclusion Parliament was elected and met in March 1681. Charles has learned a lot. He can call a Parliament anywhere he wants, but he picks the city of Oxford, which is the most Royalist and most Catholic city, in many respects, in the country. It was Charles I's headquarters during the civil war.

The king's stay in Oxford produced one of my favorite anecdotes in English history. I cannot resist telling it to you now. It seems that one day, a royal carriage was rolling down the high street in Oxford when it was stopped by an angry crowd. Somehow, there must have been a rumor. Somebody must have seen somebody get into this carriage, because the crowd assumed that it contained the king's French Catholic mistress, the Duchess of Portsmouth. They hated the Duchess of Portsmouth because it was assumed that being a French Catholic, she was whispering in the king's ear and convincing him to be a Catholic himself.

They began to jostle the carriage threateningly. At this point, the shade of the carriage was raised and out popped the head of pretty, witty Nell Gwyn, who said, "Good people, you are mistaken. I am the Protestant whore."

Nell had kept her head and so had Charles. He dissolved the Oxford Parliament at the end of the month, convinced that the country had come

round to his side. Charles II was right. Very few people protested the dissolution of the Oxford Parliament. The country had changed its mind on exclusion.

Why? By 1681, it was pretty clear that there never had been a plot to kill the king. This dog never barked. Moreover, many Tory aristocrats came to the conclusion that if you denied James's right to succeed to the throne, then you're undermining their right to succeed to their lands. He's the rightful heir. Of course, this would undermine the whole basis of their power and wealth. They aren't going to go down that road.

The Tories also won the propaganda war. Why? The government was able to sue Whig writers on charges of seditious libel; that was still on the books. Meanwhile, they looked the other way while Tory writers libeled Whigs freely. For example, in the mock epic *Absalom and Achitophel*, John Dryden, who was the poet laureate, used the Bible story to satirize the Whigs mercilessly. In this mock epic, Charles II is, of course, King David, and Monmouth is his rebellious son, Absalom, but he reserved his choicest barbs for Shaftsbury, whom he accused of almost single-handedly rattling the Great Chain of Being:

Of these the false Achitophel was first;  
A name to all succeeding ages cursed:  
For close designs and crooked counsels fit;  
Sagacious, bold, and turbulent of wit;  
Restless, unfixed in principles and place;  
In power unpleas'd,—

Remember, Shaftsbury had been a member of the CABAL.

—impatient of disgrace:

...

A daring pilot in extremity;  
Pleased with the danger, when the waves went high,  
He sought the storms; but, for a calm unfit,  
Would steer too near the sands, to boast his wit.

...



In friendship false, implacable in hate:  
Resolv'd to ruin or to rule the state.  
To compass this, the triple bond he broke;  
The pillars of the public safety shook:  
And fitted Israel for a foreign yoke.

I guess Dryden is accusing him of wanting the Dutch to dominate. It doesn't quite make sense.

Then, seiz'd with fear, yet still affecting fame,  
Usurp'd a patriot's all-atoning name.

This poem sold like hotcakes. The Tories were in a position for revenge. Indeed, the ensuing period up to the death of Charles II is usually called the Tory Revenge.

Like his father in 1629, Charles II now decided he wanted to rule without Parliament. Unlike his father, he realized that that condition might not be permanent, so to ensure success in the next election for Tories, who were clearly on the king's side, the king used the Corporation Act, his great powers to redraw charters, and a process called "*Quo Warranto*" ("by what warrant?")

In other words, he's going to individual borrowers and saying, "By warrant does that guy have a vote?" He's revoking city charters, redrawing the corporations, and purging Whigs and Dissenters and replacing them with loyal Tories. He also purged the lieutenancy and the county bench, placing them in Tory hands. These new men launched a sweeping persecution of Dissenters and Catholics. Some 13,000 Quakers alone went to jail between 1681 and 1685. These two initiatives ensured quiet in the countryside now and a Tory landslide in any future election.

Having solved the problem of local control, Charles II sought to ease other tensions in the Stuart state by following strategies pioneered by his father during the personal rule. First, remember he's not calling Parliament, so he's finally got to figure out a way to live within his means. He did, remarkably for Charles II. He finally cut his expenditures to a manageable size and

stayed within budget. He froze the payment of pensions and some salaries to courtiers. He cut his household expenditure by about half. Again, this is research that comes out of my own first book.

He also got lucky. His revenue benefited from a trade boom. The Commercial Revolution was taking off and that increased his revenue to £1.4 million a year. He also accepted a secret subsidy of £125,000 from Louis XIV in return for a pro-French foreign policy.

In terms of religion, if the Exclusion Crisis taught the king thrift and the importance of local control, it also educated him in whom his real supporters were. They were Anglican Tories—old Royalists. He now did what he could to please them. He publicly embraced Anglicanism and appointed safe Anglican politicians and clergymen to positions of authority. This is continuing Danby's policies, actually, but now Charles appears to be more enthusiastic.

The Anglican clergy responded in kind by preaching loyalty, passive obedience, and non-resistance. This is the great heyday of sermons praising the Stuart monarchy and basically saying to people, "You've got to just put up with it."

These policies left the Whigs frustrated and bereft of their most effective forum: Parliament. Remember, there's no Parliament. There's nowhere where they can complain about this. Shaftsbury fled to the Netherlands in 1682 and died the following year. In 1683, radical Whig plans were discovered to kill Charles and James at Rye House in Hertfordshire on the way back from the horse races at Newmarket.

Now who was planning to overthrow the state? The Whigs are so frustrated maybe they'll just kill Charles and James and give the Crown to Monmouth. The ensuing prosecutions broke the Whig party. Some were executed (Lord Russell, Algernon Sidney), while others like John Locke fled abroad.

Thus, Charles II appears to have crushed the Whigs and solved the problems of sovereignty, finance, foreign policy, religion, and even local control by the time he succumbed to a stroke on 6 February 1685. This death is worth

examining. The king had been feeling fine when on the morning of Monday, 2 February, as he was being shaved, he fell ill of an apoplexy. The word “apoplexy” can pretty much mean anything from heart attack to stroke to uremic convulsions. This took place in his bedchamber at Whitehall.

He was bled, purged, and vomited. He was subject to Jesuits’ powder (quinine), and he had hot irons applied to his forehead. No wonder he died.

Nobles, bishops, courtiers, and foreign ambassadors, as soon as they heard the news—and above all the hopeful and the fearful—flocked to the royal bedchamber at Whitehall Palace. It must have been a circus of whispering, crying, speculation, and hope on the part of those whose fortunes depended on this reign and on the part of those who looked forward to the next.

By Thursday, 5 February, the doctors had given up hope. At this point, the Archbishop of Canterbury informed the king, “It is time to speak out, for sir, you are about to appear before a judge who is no respecter of persons.” The Anglican bishops in the room urged Charles to take communion from them, at which he demurred.

You see, Charles II had one last trick up his sleeve. At the urging of the French ambassador, James asked his brother a question, to which the king was heard to reply, “With all my heart.” Then the Duke of York cleared the room except for a few trusted courtiers. Soon after, Father John Huddleston, the very priest who had saved Charles as a prince when he had to hide in that tree, was seen going up the backstairs to the sick room. The Duke introduced him as follows: “Sir, this good man once saved your life. He now comes to save your soul.”

Then, Charles II, Defender of the Faith and Supreme Head of the Church of England, confessed and received communion in the Roman Catholic Church. Then, he pulled James to him and begged him to look after his many children, quite a few of whom were present, and his mistresses, especially the Duchess of Portsmouth. Some of his final words were, “Let not poor Nelly starve” (referring to Nell Gwyn).

Bishop Burnet, a Whig, later complained that, “He said nothing of the queen, nor any one word of his people or of his servants, nor did he speak one word of religion or concerning the payment of his debts.” Other witnesses in the room report something different. Apparently, the queen was there, but she was overcome. She begged his pardon, but she had to leave. She couldn’t stand to be there. He looked at her and said, “She asked my pardon. Poor woman, I ask hers with all my heart.”

Then, he blessed all that were present and in them, the whole body of his subjects, and asked his subjects’ pardon for anything that had been neglected or acted contrary to the rules of government. It may have been at this point that he apologized for taking such an unconscionably long time dying. Then, on the morning of 6 February, he took his leave.

Before we leave the “Merry Monarch,” as he was called in his time, I’d like to pay one more visit to his hedonistic court, for we shall never see its like again in English history. The court was never this much fun. Once again, we fall back on the words of John Evelyn, who went to court just a few days before the king took ill:

“I am never to forget the inexpressible luxury, and profaneness, gaming, and all dissolution, and, as it were, total forgetfulness of God (it being Sunday Evening) which this day seven night, I was witness of. The king, sitting and toying with his concubines Portsmouth, Cleveland, and Mazarine, etc; a French boy singing love songs, in that glorious gallery, whilst about 20 of the great courtiers and other dissolute persons were at basset [a card game] round a large table, a bank of at least £2,000 in gold before them, upon which two gentlemen that were with me made reflections with astonishment, it being a scene of utmost vanity; and surely as they thought would never have an end. Six days after was all in the dust.”

That’s one of my favorite passages in the Evelyn diary. I’ve read it many times. I don’t know about you, but I get the sense that on the one hand, Evelyn really wants to condemn this, and on the other hand, like those of us who sometimes have to stand in supermarket checkout lines, he can’t take his eyes away from the tabloid picture in front of him.

In this lecture, Charles II faced the crisis of his reign: the Popish Plot and the Whig demand to exclude his Catholic brother James from the throne and limit the power of the monarchy. As we've seen, that crisis produced two great political parties, arguably the first real political parties in Western history, who will vie for control of the English state until the end of this course.

In his handling of the crisis in these two parties, Charles II demonstrated that he'd learned a thing or two from the disasters of the 1660s and 1670s. His patient coolness paid off as the country eventually came round to his way of thinking. As a result, despite his last minute embrace of Catholicism, Charles II left his successor a prosperous country, a full Treasury, a loyal national Church, an opposition Whig party in disarray, and a local government firmly in the hands of dependable Tories.

Unfortunately, as we'll see in the next lecture, he left all these things to his stupid brother James.

# A Catholic Restoration? 1685–88

## Lecture 38

**The fact that James encouraged the Bloody Assizes—thought they were a good thing—and the fact that he kept his army in being after the rebellion was crushed should have given everybody pause. Everyone should have realized, “There’s something about this man that we need to know.”**

**T**hanks to his brother’s policies, James II ascended the English, Scottish, and Irish thrones on a wave of enthusiasm and good will. James began well by attempting to perpetuate that good will: He proclaimed in Council that he would respect the constitution, the Church of England, and the property of his subjects. Then, he called a Parliament. Charles II’s gerrymandering and the current popularity of the monarchy resulted in an overwhelmingly Tory—and, therefore, loyal—Parliament. The Commons immediately voted the king the same revenue settlement as Charles II had been granted. They failed to realize that because of the trade boom, these taxes would yield about £1,500,000 a year, some 20–25 percent more than Charles II had received. They voted an additional £400,000 a year for five years so that the king could raise an army. Their excuse for this generosity was that James was already facing a rebellion.

In the summer of 1685, the Duke of Monmouth returned from European exile, landed on the west coast, and raised a rebellion against his uncle. Few aristocrats joined the Duke. His army consisted of a ragtag band of farmers and tradesmen, many of them Dissenters. James used his parliamentary funds to raise a large, well-trained, and well-equipped force. Using the state of emergency as an excuse, James staffed the army with many Catholic officers. This army, nominally led by the Catholic Earl of Feversham but really by the king’s talented favorite, John, Lord Churchill, handily defeated the rebels at the battle of Sedgmoor in July. Monmouth and about 300 rebels were condemned to death, the latter in kangaroo trials presided over by George, Lord “Hanging Judge,” Jeffreys. Their bodies remained hanging throughout the West Country as a warning against further rebellions. A further 800 were transported to the American colonies. This, and the fact that

James kept his army in being after the rebellion was crushed, should have given his subjects pause. But for now, he remained popular. How did he lose his popularity in three years?

James II was neither so clever nor so subtle as his brother. From the beginning of his reign, he worshiped openly and devoutly as a Roman Catholic. As this implies, James was less of a libertine than his brother, launching a reform of the household and banning the men and women of pleasure from it. This did much to restore the dignity and restrain the finances of the court. But it also made the court less interesting, less attractive, and less useful as a field of political patronage. In short, James II was a great administrator but a lousy politician.

James was a military man who had distinguished himself as Lord High Admiral during the Second Dutch War. He preferred order, hierarchy, and obedience. As this implies, James was a lifelong absolutist who saw disagreement as disloyalty. He felt that his father's only mistake was in making concessions. Above all, he was a committed Catholic who saw it as his duty to bring his people back into the fold—kicking and screaming if necessary. James did not want to force conversion. Rather, he believed that if Catholicism were tolerated, granted an equal footing with the Church of England, it would naturally win the hearts and minds of his subjects. In other words, and not a little ironically, James II, authoritarian, championed religious toleration for all.

James embarked on Catholic emancipation within six months of his accession. He began by informing Parliament that he intended to retain the Catholic officers in his army and use the dispensing power to appoint more.



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**King James II wanted to repeal laws against Catholics.**

When Parliament lodged a protest, he prorogued it. He then started to pack the judiciary with judges who would support the dispensing and suspending powers. The judges did support him in the test case *Goddin v. Hales*. James used the dispensing power to fill the army with Catholics. In April 1687, he suspended the Clarendon Code through another Declaration of Indulgence. Once again, Dissenters largely rejected toleration at the price of Catholic emancipation.

In any case, what James really wanted was parliamentary repeal of the Clarendon Code and the penal laws against Catholics. In 1686, he began to purge the lieutenancy and county bench (the JPs) and remodel and gerrymander city corporations once again, this time, to install those friendly to Catholics and Dissenters, all with a view toward the next election. In other words, he began to displace Anglican-Tories—natural supporters of monarchy—with obscure Catholics, former enemies (Whigs, republicans, cooperative Dissenters), and people of marginal local importance. In the process, he was dispossessing the natural rulers of England, people who viewed their local offices as a form of property. Furthermore, he demanded that the clergy of the Anglican Church cooperate in its own demise by reading the Declaration of Indulgence from the pulpit in the spring of 1688. Seven bishops, including the Archbishop of Canterbury, William Sancroft, responded by publicly questioning the dispensing power in a printed petition. James, taken by surprise, threw them into prison, thus turning them into martyrs.

These measures were wildly unpopular. Why did James's subjects, especially the ruling elite, put up with them? Most English men and women were willing to put up with James's policies because they anticipated a short reign (he was 52 at his accession), and they knew that he would be succeeded by the Protestants Mary and Anne. That all changed at the end of 1687 when James's young second wife, Mary Beatrice of Modena, announced that she was pregnant. A female child would have almost no significance for the succession, because she would come after Mary and Anne. But a male child would

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**The prospect of a Catholic succession, followed by a long reign, was intensely frightening to Anglicans and Dissenters alike.**

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take precedence over them, and there was no doubt that, without Charles and Danby to thwart him, James would raise this child a good Catholic. The prospect of a Catholic succession, followed by a long reign, was intensely frightening to Anglicans and Dissenters alike.

Catholics at court were convinced that God would give Mary Beatrice a boy. Protestants wondered how the Catholics could be so sure. They began to whisper that the pregnancy was a fake. On 10 June 1688, Mary Beatrice did, indeed, give birth to a little boy, dubbed James Francis Edward. Court Catholics were overjoyed. Court Protestants charged that the birth was faked and that the child had been smuggled up the backstairs in a warming pan. The king was reduced to the indignity of declaring in Privy Council that the child was his.

Just three days before, a group of seven noblemen gathered in secret to invite William of Orange, Stadholder of the Netherlands, the foremost Protestant in Europe and the husband of Princess Mary, to invade England. His acceptance changed the course of English—indeed, Western—history. ■

### Suggested Reading

Bucholz and Key, *Early Modern England*, chap. 9, sec. 8.

Coward, *Stuart Age*, chap. 11.

Kishlansky, *Monarchy Transformed*, chap. 11.

### Questions to Consider

1. Given England's history, why did James II think that his plan for Catholic emancipation would succeed? What beliefs, habits, and institutions was he depending on? Of which did he fail to take account?
2. Why did the Church of England so resist toleration for Dissenters, as well as Catholics? Why did Dissenters reject their own toleration if Catholics were tolerated, too? Why not live and let live?

## **A Catholic Restoration? 1685–88**

### **Lecture 38—Transcript**

In the last lecture, we saw how, after weathering the Exclusion Crisis, Charles II cowed the Whigs, embraced the Tories, dismissed Parliament, cut his expenses, raised his revenue, pursued a secret French foreign policy, faked Anglicanism, and asserted control in the localities. As a result, when he died in the arms of the Roman Catholic Church in 1685, the monarchy was as powerful and as popular as at any period in the last century. It looked as if the Stuarts had solved the major problems of their reign. England was well on its way to becoming an absolute monarchy, but it was not yet anywhere near a Catholic one. Recall that the king himself had to wait until his poll numbers didn't matter before he could convert. It was to be the great tragedy of the next Stuart that he could not leave the missing piece alone.

This lecture examines the short and unpopular reign of King James II and his attempt to restore toleration for Catholics. Unpopular as this was, no one contemplated rebellion until James's queen, Mary Beatrice, announced that she was pregnant. The possibility of a Catholic heir and another Catholic reign would lead to the greatest crisis of the Stuart period. Thanks to his brother's policies, James II ascended the English, Scottish, and Irish thrones on a wave of Royalist sentiment, enthusiasm, and good will. It's true that James was a Catholic, but the last few years of Whig extremism, culminating in the Exclusion Crisis and the Rye House plot, were more vivid in recent memory than Bloody Mary and the Gunpowder Plot. If you're looking around for the troublemakers in 1685, it was the Whigs and their Dissenting friends.

It should also be said that James began on his best behavior. The new king started the reign by proclaiming in Council that he would respect the constitution, the Church of England, and the property of his subjects. Then he called a Parliament. Charles II's gerrymandering and the current popularity of the monarchy resulted in a Tory landslide, which meant an overwhelmingly loyal Parliament. The Commons immediately voted the king the same revenue settlement as Charles II had been granted. What they didn't realize was that because of the Commercial Revolution and the boom in trade, the same taxes were now going to yield £1,500,000 a year. That's

20–25 percent more than Charles II had received. Then, this Parliament voted an additional £400,000 a year for five to eight years so that the king could raise an army. James II's total revenue approached the heretofore unprecedented sum of £2 million a year.

Why were they so generous? Their excuse was that the new king was already facing a rebellion. In the summer of 1685, the Duke of Monmouth returned from European exile. He'd been forced to flee during the Tory Revenge. He landed on the west coast and raised a rebellion against his uncle.

Who was this would-be king? He was Charles II's first illegitimate son by Lucy Waters. Monmouth had always been his father's favorite until he started claiming that his father had promised to marry his mother and the Crown. Monmouth was handsome. He was a distinguished soldier. He was very popular, but he was not the brightest of Charles II's brood. Few aristocrats seem to have been discontented enough to join him. As a result, the Duke's army consisted of a ragtag band of farmers and tradesmen, many of them Dissenters. He lands in the West Country, and ordinary people who are worried about a Catholic monarch join his cause.

James used the parliamentary funds that we've talked about to raise, for his part, a large, well-trained, and well-equipped force. Using the state of emergency as an excuse, James was also able to staff it with many Catholic officers. Remember, the king has the dispensing power, which allows him to ignore the law in individual cases. He dispensed with the laws against Catholics to plant these Catholic officers. In fact, the army was nominally headed by the Catholic Louis de Duras, Earl of Feversham. Its genius, however, was its second in command, the king's favorite, John, Lord Churchill. We'll hear that name again, so I'm going to spend a little time introducing this man.

Churchill was the eldest son of Sir Winston Churchill, a court official. John started his court career as a page to James, Duke of York, which means he started as a little boy. At court, he was soon noticed by the Duke for his martial prowess and by the Duchess of Cleveland, the former countess of Castlemaine, for prowess of another kind. This is Charles II's favorite mistress, but she was losing her hold on Charles II in the 1670s, hence her

entertainment of other lovers. Once the king actually caught them in bed, saying to Churchill, “Go you rascal, but I forgive you because you do it to get a living.”

Young Churchill made quite a living out of these connections. He served as the Duke of York’s aide de camp. (This is the future James II. We’ve now moved back about a decade to bring you up on Churchill’s history.) He distinguishes himself on campaign at Tangiers and in Flanders, and he eventually rose to the colonelcy of the First Dragoons.

By 1685, young Churchill had settled down. He’s married the fascinating and beautiful Sarah Jennings, a maid of honor at court. Now he was getting his living by chasing rebels for the king. Thanks to Churchill’s generalship, his army handily defeated the rebels at the battle of Sedgemoor, near Bridgewater in Somerset, in July 1685.

Monmouth and about 300 rebels were condemned to death, the latter in kangaroo trials presided over by James’s Lord Chief Justice, George, Lord Jeffreys. Jeffreys was known as “Hanging Judge” Jeffreys for his treatment of Whigs during the Tory Revenge, and he more than lived up to his name in 1685. He offered the same quick justice to Monmouth’s rebels: Jeffreys presided over 1,336 trials in nine days. That comes to about 148 trials a day—assuming a 10-hour day, that’s nearly 15 an hour, or a verdict every four minutes. Jeffreys intimidated witnesses. He bullied juries and his fellow justices. At sentencing, he took particular delight in describing in horrific detail the punishments that the law could mete out to the guilty. Of course, he found plenty of people guilty.

The trials, which are portrayed in Stephenson’s *Lorna Doone*, would be forever known as the “Bloody Assizes.” Over 300 rebels were hanged, drawn, and quartered. Their rotting corpses were left to hang in villages throughout the West Country as a warning against further rebellions. Another 800 were transported to the American colonies. As for Monmouth, he suffered the usual death of noble traitors: a public execution. This one was particularly grisly. Despite giving the henchman a gold piece and asking him to “do his office better than you did to my late Lord Russell,” the deed

took five whacks. The crowd, who liked Monmouth, was so incensed that they threatened to tear the executioner to pieces.

The fact that James encouraged the Bloody Assizes—thought they were a good thing—and the fact that he kept his army in being after the rebellion was crushed should have given everybody pause. Everyone should have realized, “There’s something about this man that we need to know.” For now, he remained popular. The question I have to answer in the rest of this lecture is, “How did he blow it all in just three years?”

One place to begin is with the new king’s personality. James II was neither so clever nor so subtle as his brother. As Arthur Onslow put it, “King James was certainly a far better man than his brother, although of a far inferior understanding.” The Protestant Whig Bishop Burnet, who you would not expect to be a friend of James, had this to say:

He was a prince who seemed made for greater things than will be found in the course of his life, more particularly of his reign. He was esteemed in the former parts of his life, a man of great courage, as he was quite through it a man of great application to business. He had no vivacity of thought, invention or expression, but a good judgment where his religion or education gave him not a bias, which it did very often.

He was bred with strange notions of the obedience due to princes, and he came to take up as strange ones of submission to priests. He was naturally a man of truth, fidelity, and justice, but his religion was so infused in him, and he was so managed in it by his priests, that the principles which nature laid in him had little power over him when the concerns of his church stood in the way.

You wonder if Bishop Burnet, a Protestant, would have said that if James had been a devout Protestant and allowed the Protestant religion to influence his reign. Still, Burnet is right that James’s religion is a great place to begin with him. As we’ve seen, James Stuart was incapable of dissembling the Catholicism that so worried his subjects. Remember that he had

started worshipping openly as a Catholic halfway through the reign of his brother Charles.

From the beginning of this reign, he worshipped openly, even ostentatiously, as a Roman Catholic. Indeed, he commissioned Sir Christopher Wren to design a Roman Catholic Chapel Royal at Whitehall Palace. The result was a riot of post-Tridentine Baroque splendor, perfectly designed to infuriate Protestants, who of course tend to incline toward fairly plain chapels. Unfortunately, this chapel burned down with the rest of Whitehall Palace in 1698, and we don't have any illustrations. But we do have our old friend Evelyn, who decided to visit the Catholic chapel during Christmas week in 1686. Listen to his combination of fascination, condemnation, and shock at this beachhead of Catholic culture at the English court:

I was to hear the music of the Italians in the new chapel, now first of all opened at Whitehall publicly for the popish service. Nothing can be finer than the magnificent marble work and architecture at the east end, where are four statues representing St. John, St. Peter, St. Paul, and the Church—statues in white marble, the work of Mr. Gibbons, with all the carving and pillars of exquisite and great cost.

The history or altar piece is the salutation, the *Volto*, in *fresca*, the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin according to their traditions, with our Blessed Savior and a world of figures, painted by Verio. The thrones where the king and queen sit is very glorious in a closet [a closet in this case would be a small gallery] above just opposite to the altar. Here we saw the Catholic bishop in his miter and rich copes, with six or seven Jesuits and others in rich copes richly habited, often taking off and putting on the bishop's miter, who sat in a chair with arms pontifically, was adored, and censed by three Jesuits in their copes. Then, he went to the altar and made diverse cringes there, censing the images, and a glorious tabernacle placed upon the altar, and now and then changing place.

You can see Evelyn is just overwhelmed by this riot of Catholicism and incense. He can't handle it.

The crosier (which was of silver) put into his hand, with a world of mysterious ceremony, the music playing and singing. And so I came away not believing I should ever have lived to see such things in the King of England's palace, after it had pleased God to enlighten this nation.

What would Cromwell's soldiers have said? You remember Evelyn had a run-in with them. As James's piety would suggest, this king was less of a libertine than his brother. For example, in my own research, I discovered that he launched a sweeping reform of the central administration of the royal household. He cut household offices by about one-third, from almost 1,200 positions at court down to 800. He eliminated sinecure offices, life tenures, and fee taking. His generous financial settlement allowed him to pay people fairly well. He also eliminated sale of office, which had crept back in in the late years of Charles II.

He also purged the men and women of pleasure from the court. James's court wasn't nearly as much fun as Charles's. Finally, when demanded by Mary Beatrice, he even banned his mistresses, most notably Catherine Sedley, though not before making her Countess of Dorchester. By the way, James's mistresses were famous for their reputed plainness, which the court wits explained as the penance imposed on him by his confessors. Even the Countess of Dorchester admitted, "We are none of us handsome, and if we had wit, he had not enough himself to discover it."

Still, James's good government did a lot to restore the dignity and restrain the finances of the court. You'll note that it also made the court a lot less interesting and attractive. In short, to sum up, James II was a great administrator, an indiscriminate lover, and a lousy politician. James was also a military man who had distinguished himself as Lord High Admiral during the Second Dutch War. As this implies, he preferred order, hierarchy, clear-cut rules of conduct, and obedience to orders. James was also a lifelong absolutist. He saw disagreement as disloyalty. He felt that Charles I's (his father's) only mistake was to have made concessions.

But above all, we come back to the central fact: James was a committed Catholic who saw it as his duty to bring his people back into the fold—

kicking and screaming if necessary. I have to be careful here, and I want to be fair to him. James did not want to force conversions, and he rejected persecution. He is no Bloody Mary. Rather, James believed, in his supreme naivety, that if all Christian faiths, including Catholicism, were just tolerated and granted an equal footing in the free market of ideas, then his faith would naturally triumph in the hearts and minds of his subjects. If Catholics were just free to spread the word, then everybody would naturally be a Catholic, “Just like me.”

In other words, and not a little ironically, James II, authoritarian, championed religious toleration for all. Establishing that toleration would become the principal policy initiative of his reign. In a funny sort of way here, he’s the good guy. It’s very complicated. James began to act on Catholic emancipation within six months of his accession. In November 1685, he informed Parliament that first, he intended to maintain his standing army. Parliament said nothing. Second, he intended to retain the Catholic officers in it and use the dispensing power to appoint more. At this, James’s heretofore compliant Tory Parliament balked. Instead, they demanded the dismissal of all Catholic officers. When Parliament launched a formal protest, James prorogued them—he sent them home temporarily.

He then began to pack the judiciary with judges (remember, the king can appoint and dismiss judges at will) who would support the dispensing and suspending powers, which remember I told you were very controversial—this idea that the king can dispense with or suspend the law. In other words, he wants to make it legally possible for him to continue to employ Catholics in violation of the Test Act and penal laws.

In the test case, *Goddin v. Hales* of 1686, Chief Justice Herbert gave James an opinion that would have made James I proud. I will read the whole opinion to you:

That the kings of England are sovereign princes.

That the laws of England are the king’s laws.



That therefore it is an inseparable prerogative in the kings of England to dispense with penal laws in particular cases and upon necessary reasons.

That of those reasons and those necessities, the king himself is sole judge; and then, which is consequent upon all.

That this is not a trust invested in, or granted to, the king by the people, but the ancient remains of the sovereign power and prerogative of the kings of England; which never yet was taken from them, nor can be.

I guess this guy completely missed the civil war and certainly had no truck with Whig opinions. With this judgment in hand, the king began to dispense with the Test Act in individual cases and fill the civil government and army with Catholics in England, Scotland, and Ireland.

In April 1687, he suspended the Clarendon Code by issuing a second Declaration of Indulgence. Once again, the Stuarts were hoping for an alliance between the two extremes—that Catholics and Dissenters would join together in support of the king. In other words, that Dissenters wouldn't mind Catholics being tolerated if it meant they were tolerated too.

Once again, the Stuarts were disappointed. The Dissenters felt that's too much, their hatred for Catholics was so strong. "We don't want to be tolerated if they're tolerated too."

In any case, what James really wanted was not the unsatisfactory expedient of suspension or dispensing of the law. He wanted new laws. He wanted Parliament to revoke the Cavalier Code (the Clarendon Code) and the penal laws against Catholics.

In 1686, he began to purge the lieutenantcy and the county bench, and remodel and gerrymander city corporations. He's doing just what Charles II did, except that this time, he's purging Tories and Anglicans. Who's he got to put in their place? A few Catholics, but there aren't that many. Dissenters, old Whigs, radical republicans—anybody, he doesn't care. He doesn't care

who they are. He doesn't care if they're important or not in the locality. He just wants people who will support a change in the law.

James II was dispossessing the natural rulers of England—people who viewed their offices as a form of property, just as surely as Cromwell and the major-generals had done, in favor of persons whom the Anglican elite regarded as the dregs of society.

In his political ineptitude, James went still further. In the spring of 1688, the king demanded that the clergy of the Anglican Church cooperate in its own demise as the only fully legal church in England by reading the Declaration of Indulgence from the pulpit. You see what's happening: He's issued this Declaration, which essentially says, "You don't have to be an Anglican. It's okay for you to be a Dissenter or for you to be a Catholic." Now, he asks the Church of England to read that from the pulpit, saying, "You don't have to come here anymore."

The king fully expected that the very clergy who had so long preached unquestioning loyalty, meek submission, passive obedience, and non-resistance to the divinely appointed sovereign would now put that preaching into practice. "They'd been preaching that they're not supposed to resist me. They've been preaching that good Anglicans will do what the king says."

Instead, here's what happened. Seven bishops, including the Archbishop of Canterbury, William Sancroft, responded with a printed petition. It was really daring James to print it—to get it out there. It was a printed petition publicly questioning the dispensing power. James was shocked that the Anglican clergy would publicly disagree with him. He called the petition a "standard of rebellion," and he threw the bishops into prison, which of course turned them into martyrs.

I'm sure you will not be terribly surprised to learn that all of these measures were wildly unpopular. Why did James's subjects, especially his ruling elite, put up with that? After all, James was getting rid of the people who supported him in exclusion. He was getting rid of the people who had seen themselves, not only for the reign of Charles II but for hundreds of years,

as the natural rulers of the country and putting in anybody—any parvenu carpetbagger who'd vote to change the laws.

There were two reasons that people put up with it, one of them born of the past and one centered on the future. First, no one wanted another civil war. Remember, I told you that the English ruling elite had learned that lesson. “We’re not going to cut off the king’s head. We’re never going to resort to violence again. We’re never going to turn to the common people again. That way only brings social disaster, chaos, and all the sects. We will never do that again.”

Maybe they won’t have to, because the second reason that most English men and women were willing to put up with James II and his policies was that they anticipated a short reign. James II was 52 years old at his accession, and he’d never been in robust health. When he died, everyone knew that he would be succeeded by one of his two Protestant daughters: Mary, who was married to William of Orange, the first Protestant in Europe, or, if she should die, Anne, who was married to George of Denmark—perfectly safe Protestants.

Therefore, in 1686–1687, the unpleasant Catholic experiment looked like it was going to be a short one. Why risk another English revolution? “Good Protestants can endure as we endured the reign of Bloody Mary in 1553–1558.” It looked like a rerun of that situation. That is, in the summer of 1687, the Great Chain of Being still held.

It began to crack at the end of the year when James’s young second wife, Mary Beatrice of Modena, announced she was expecting. Everyone in England knew that according to the laws of hereditary succession, and in particular the law of primogenitor, a female child would have almost no significance for the succession, because that female child would come after Mary and Anne. James could raise this child any religion he wanted. It didn’t matter.

But the laws of primogenitor dictated that a male child would take precedence over his daughters, no matter how old they were. By the way, this rule has only recently been changed by Queen Elizabeth II. There was

no doubt that without Charles and Danby to thwart him, James would raise a son to be a good Catholic. The prospect of a Catholic succession followed by a long reign was intensely frightening to Anglicans and Dissenters alike, especially given the fact that Catholics at court were now boastful. They were convinced that God had finally given the Catholics a miracle after there'd been all those Protestant winds and things. God had finally given the Catholics a miracle. They were convinced that Mary Beatrice's pregnancy was not only going to go forward, but that she would have a boy.

Protestants, of course, wondered how it was that Catholics could be so sure. After all, the odds of a boy or girl were about even, right? Moreover, the odds of the pregnancy coming to terms were long. Remember, I told you that Mary Beatrice had not had a happy obstetrical history. In fact, her obstetrical history was so bad that it made Catherine of Aragon's look moderately successful.

Court Protestants began to whisper that the pregnancy was a fake. The queen's pregnancy came to term a month premature—that by the way added to the charge of its being a fake—in the early summer of 1688. James, so naïve, summons all his loyal courtiers to be present at the birth—all his friends—lots and lots of Catholics, whom of course the country wouldn't believe.

In this case, James wanted plenty of witnesses of God's favor for the One True Faith. I should explain to you that royal births were usually fairly public affairs, but he really wants the room packed. With his usual political savvy, he either invites Catholics or time-serving Anglicans whom nobody trusts. While the Catholic courtiers flock to St. James Palace, Protestant peers who don't really want to know get out of town.

There's one significant exception. It was the man whom Charles II characterized as never in the way and never out of the way. Do you remember Sidney Godolphin? By now, he's Sidney, Lord Godolphin, and he's Mary's Chamberlain, so he had to be there. But he was also one of the smartest men in England. He was a future lord treasurer, and Godolphin liked to play the horses. I submit that a betting man would want to know, so at the crucial moment he made sure that he was right there.

On 10 June 1688, Mary Beatrice gave birth to a little boy named James Francis Edward. Court Catholics were overjoyed. God had given them their miracle. Court Protestants, even those who had gone to the birth, had held back from the childbed. They wanted to give Mary a moment of privacy, so of course, they couldn't claim that they'd actually seen the birth of the little boy. It was a month premature and you know, maybe something funny is going on.

The Whigs began to charge that the little boy was smuggled up the backstairs, like Father Huddleston was (we know the Catholics know where the backstairs are), in a warming pan. They began to charge the pregnancy was a fake and that the little boy was not really James's son. Remember, only one, Godolphin, looked. He knew.

The king was actually reduced to the indignity of declaring in Privy Council that the child was his. Can you imagine? He had to summon the Privy Council and say, "Look, he's really mine." He ordered bonfires and bells, but there was very little rejoicing. Our faithful Evelyn wrote, "A young prince born, etc., which will cause dispute."

Indeed it would. The birth of a Catholic prince galvanized the ruling class into resistance. In fact, just three days before the prince's birth—and that timing is interesting—a cabal of seven noblemen gathered in secret to assess the situation. They were Thomas Osborne, Earl of Danby; William Cavendish, Earl of Devonshire; Richard, Lord Lumley; Edward Russell; Charles Talbot, Earl of Shrewsbury; Henry Sidney; and Henry Compton, Bishop of London.

The reason I've named these names is that I want you to understand that this group included nearly every shade of contemporary opinion. There were three Whigs: Devonshire, Russell, and Sidney. You may recognize those names from two of the victims of the Tory Revenge who were executed after the Rye House Plot. There was also a Tory peer (Danby), a Scots peer (Lumley), and an Anglican bishop (Compton). Two, Lumley and Shrewsbury, were even converted Catholics. In addition, Sidney had strong connections at court, Lumley with the army, and Russell with the navy.

What's my point? James II had managed to offend virtually every segment of the political nation. This group of men, which had been meeting secretly with representatives from the Dutch Republic for over a year, decided to write a letter to William of Orange, Stadholder of the Netherlands, the foremost Protestant in Europe, the husband of Princess Mary, and James's son-in-law. They wrote to urge him to invade England. His acceptance of that note would change the course of English and Western history. In this lecture, we saw how a well-meaning but politically inept king could throw away the advantages of a full Treasury, an ascendant Tory party, a supportive state Church, and even a measure of popularity, all in three years. That's something of a record; it took Mary I five.

In each case, a committed Catholic monarch sought to take the country back to Rome against its will. There's a difference, however. The difference is this: Mary's problem was that she didn't have an heir. She had a chance in the sense that a lot of people in England during her reign were still Catholic. There was a critical mass. There was a base to build on. James's problem is not that he doesn't have an heir. He's got the heir, but there are so few Catholics left that there's very little base. When he tried to ask Catholics to serve in government, there weren't very many who were qualified, which is why he's got to turn to these Dissenters and Whigs. Even the ones who were qualified wanted no part of it because they were afraid of what their neighbors would do to them.

In other words, over the previous 130 years, a ruling class had developed based on landed wealth, government service, loyalty to the Stuart monarchy, loyalty to the Church of England, and to their rights and liberties as Englishmen. It was James's foolish idea to ask them to choose between their loyalty to the Stuarts and their loyalty to all these other things. As we'll find out in the next lecture, when push came to shove, they didn't choose the Stuarts.

# The Glorious Revolution: 1688–89

## Lecture 39

**James II push[ed] the loyalty of the ruling Anglican class and the links of the Great Chain of Being to their limit with his attempt to secure a toleration for Dissenters and Catholics against the wishes of his ruling elite and, apparently, the vast majority of his subjects. In the summer of 1688, both the Chain and their loyalty were broken.**

**A**fter extensive preparations, William, Prince of Orange, invaded England in November 1688. He took this step for three reasons: to protect his wife's claim to the English throne, to prevent England from turning Catholic and allying with Louis XIV, and to bring the power and wealth of the British kingdoms into the balance against Louis XIV. William spent most of the summer of 1688 raising money and troops. In the end, he assembled a force consisting of 20,000 foot and 500 horse, along with 200 transports and 149 warships.

James actually had more troops, some 25,000, but they were relatively untried compared to William's veterans, who had been battle-hardened against the French army. In other respects, James was ill prepared. Disbelieving that he would be attacked by his own son-in-law, he refused French naval and military help. Louis XIV, trusting James's reassurances, launched a campaign against Rhine-Palatine, thus tying up troops that might have been used against a defenseless Dutch Republic. James's only serious preparation was to backpedal on his purges of local government and promise to call an election. These moves were dismissed as insincere by Protestants. They discouraged Catholics and their sympathizers.

As in 1588, even the weather cooperated with the Protestant side, the prevailing winds blowing William's fleet to England and keeping James's in port. William of Orange landed at Torbay, on the southwest coast, on 5 November 1688, the anniversary of the Gunpowder Plot. James's superior forces should have been able to throw William into the sea. But the king hesitated, taking several weeks to march out against the invader.



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**William III led a siege on the shores of Torbay. His force of 20,000 had 500 horses, 200 transports, and 149 warships.**

The country also hesitated at first. Gradually, important noblemen began to gravitate to William's camp. Perhaps more important, they often brought the militia, which they had been ordered to raise, with them. (Thus, the Stuarts' problems with local control proved fatal once again.) The trickle became a flood between November 23–25, when the king found that he had been deserted by Prince George of Denmark, his other son-in-law; John, Lord Churchill, his principal favorite and military commander; the Duke of Ormond, leader of the most staunchly Royalist family in England; and his other daughter, Princess Ann.

At this point, James II realized that the jig was up. The king returned to London and put Queen Mary Beatrice and the little prince on a boat for France. On 11 December 1688, he, too, attempted to flee, in disguise. He was recognized and apprehended by a group of fishermen on the east coast and returned to London. William was as anxious to have his father-in-law out of the country as James was anxious to be so. The Prince of Orange placed the king under loose house arrest at Rochester, on the English Channel. From



here, James was able to make his escape easily on 23 December 1688. The Restoration Settlement was at an end.

The ruling elite moved quickly to maintain order. On 24 December 1688, an assembly of 60 peers petitioned William to administer the realm until a settlement could be worked out. On 26 December, 300 former MPs and civic leaders concurred. This group agreed to elections for another Convention Parliament, which met on 22 January 1689. It soon divided along party lines. Tories, dedicated to divine right and the hereditary succession, tried desperately to forge a settlement that preserved those principles. Some argued that James II was still king, and William could be his regent, but no one believed that James would agree. Others suggested that Mary, as the rightful heir (if one believed that the prince's birth was faked), be named queen. Whigs, on the other hand, believed in parliamentary sovereignty and the contractual basis of government. (John Locke would publish his *Second Treatise*, arguing for this principle, within a year.) Whigs, therefore, saw no problem with simply naming William as king. In short, the Tory position was romantic and emotional; the Whig position, rational, practical, and untraditional. William settled matters by making clear that if denied the Crown, he would take his troops and go home.

On 13 February 1689, William and Mary were offered the Crown by Parliament, with administrative power to rest with William. At the same time, they were presented with a Declaration of Rights, which stated that no king of England could tax without parliamentary permission, use the suspending power or abuse the dispensing power, manipulate the judiciary, or continue a standing army without parliamentary permission. Historians have debated ever since whether this constituted a contract.

What did this all mean? Why was it dubbed the Glorious Revolution? The Revolution of 1688–1689 was thought of as “glorious” by the Protestant ruling elite, at least. No blood was shed. It seemed inevitable, easy, and God-ordained. Unlike the period 1642–1660, the ruling elite was able to engineer a political revolution without a social one. This time, the lower orders did what they were told. This might cause us, from the viewpoint of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, to ask what was so glorious about a revolution that did nothing for the great mass of the people and was perpetrated to preserve religious

intolerance. The Revolution of 1688–1689 can still be regarded as glorious because it offered progressive answers to most of the questions that had beset the Stuarts for nearly a century.

On the question of sovereignty, clearly, Parliament was sovereign. When William and Mary and Anne and George proved unable to have living children, Parliament would once again draw the succession to its liking in the Act of Settlement of 1701. The English king remained powerful, with most of his executive powers intact. But his financial and diplomatic situation would dictate that he could

no longer rule without Parliament. That meant, in turn, that he had to choose ministers with which Parliament could work. Thus, in 1688, England was well on its way to constitutional monarchy.

**The ensuing Nine Years' War would be the first of seven colossal conflicts pitting Britain against France between 1688 and 1815.**

On the issue of foreign policy, William's accession would bring the British kingdoms into the fight against France. In fact, the ensuing Nine Years' War would be the first of seven

colossal conflicts pitting Britain against France between 1688 and 1815. Britain would win or draw six of those wars and emerge the most powerful military state, with the greatest overseas empire, and therefore, the richest country, on earth.

On the issue of finance, these wars would force Crown and Parliament to finally solve the former's money problems by tapping the growing wealth of the English economy.

On the issue of religion, clearly, England would not be Catholic. However, Parliament recognized that Dissenters had stayed loyal to Protestantism even when James offered them toleration. As a reward, they were granted the Act of Toleration, which enabled them to worship openly, in peace. (They were still subject to the Test Act.) In the end, with the pressure off for a Counter-Reformation, de facto tolerance would gradually be extended to Catholics, as well.

On the issue of local versus central control, it should be obvious that the landed aristocracy was as powerful as ever.

In the end, the Glorious Revolution marks England's first successful break from the Great Chain of Being. English men and women, not God, had chosen a king. They were masters of their own property. They could choose their religion (as long as it was Protestant). They could take on the might of France. They could run their localities as they saw fit. Having broken their chains, they would now begin to flex their muscles. ■

### Suggested Reading

Bucholz and Key, *Early Modern England*, chap. 9, sec. 9.

Coward, *Stuart Age*, chap. 11.

Hoppit, *Land of Liberty?* chap. 2.

Kishlansky, *Monarchy Transformed*, chap. 11.

Speck, *Reluctant Revolutionaries*.

### Questions to Consider

1. Why did James II hesitate, then give up so easily? Could he have won?
2. To what extent was the Glorious Revolution a precedent and a model for the American Revolution 90 years later? To what extent were they different?

# The Glorious Revolution: 1688–89

## Lecture 39—Transcript

In the last lecture, we saw James II push the loyalty of the ruling Anglican class and the links of the Great Chain of Being to their limit with his attempt to secure a toleration for Dissenters and Catholics against the wishes of his ruling elite and apparently the vast majority of his subjects.

In the summer of 1688, both the Chain and their loyalty were broken as a result of the birth of a Catholic Prince of Wales. In response, the “immortal seven,” as they became known in English history, sent the fateful invitation for William of Orange to invade his father-in-law’s kingdoms.

In this lecture, we’ll trace the course of that invasion and its aftermath: the Glorious Revolution of 1688–1689. This will include the flight of James II and, after much parliamentary debate, the proclamation of William III and Mary II as king and queen of England, Scotland, and Ireland.

The lecture concludes with the significance of the Revolution of 1688–1689 for the English Constitution, religious toleration, and England’s role in the world. It will argue that the Glorious Revolution provided answers to all the problems that had beset the Stuart century, albeit provisional ones so long as James II and Louis XIV had anything to say about it.

The Glorious Revolution also marks England’s final break with the Great Chain of Being and its entry into the modern world.

In fact, William of Orange had been preparing to do something about his father-in-law even before the famous invitation arrived. He decided to invade England for three reasons: first, to protect his wife’s claim to the English throne; second, to prevent England from turning Catholic and allying with Louis XIV; and third, to bring the power and wealth of the British kingdoms into the balance in his crusade against Louis XIV.

William spent most of the summer of 1688 and all of his personal and financial credit raising money and troops for this desperate gamble. In the end, he assembled a force that was actually larger than the Spanish

Armada. It consisted of 20,000 foot and 500 horse soldiers, 200 transports, and 149 warships.

James actually had more troops, some 25,000 plus the county militias. That was the army he'd been able to raise with the parliamentary funds of 1685. The English forces were relatively untried, however, apart from their defeat of frightened townsmen and peasants at Sedgmoor. William's veterans (mainly Dutch but some exiled Whigs) had been battle-hardened against the French army. They'd been fighting to defend the Netherlands against Louis XIV for years.

In other respects, too, James was ill prepared. Despite the warnings of his advisors, James didn't really believe that his own son-in-law would attack him. He refused to believe it. When Louis offered French naval and military help, he refused that too. Louis XIV, trusting James's reassurances, launched a campaign that September against Rhine-Palatine. That means that Louis's troops moved west just at a moment when they might have been used to invade the Netherlands when William was away. That was a crucial break for the Dutch and for the rebellion.

James's only serious preparation was to backpedal on his purges of local government and to promise to call an election, but nobody believed him. As in 1588, even the weather cooperated on the Protestant side. A November Protestant wind blew William's fleet to England and kept James's bottled up in port. The prevailing winds meant that James's fleet couldn't intercept William's. They blew William's fleet to the southwest coast.

William of Orange landed unopposed at Torbay on the southwest coast on 5 November 1688. Could he have picked a better date for a Protestant invasion? It was actually the day after his birthday, but it was also the anniversary of the Gunpowder Plot and the centennial of the Armada.

Still, James's superior forces should have been able to throw William into the sea, but the king seems to have suffered a paralysis of nerve. He heard the news while he was sitting for a painting for Samuel Pepys, actually. He immediately developed a nosebleed. His nose would continue bleeding all throughout the events I'm going to describe in this lecture.

Still, when the force marched down to the south coast, James should have thrown William into the sea. Instead, he hesitated to act, taking over a week to march out against the invader. Why? At first glance, it makes no sense. He had the larger army encamped and ready to go on Salisbury plain. His coffers were full. He had home field advantage, and there had not been a successful invasion of England since the Wars of the Roses.

James also knew that his forces were untested. Remember, they're divided in religion and loyalty. Some of them are Protestants and some of them are Catholics. He also had figured out by this time that he was very unpopular. Maybe he couldn't forget the tragic history of the Stuarts or the Catholic cause in England. Maybe the shock of being betrayed by his eldest daughter and his own son-in-law was just too much. For whatever reason, the king didn't march until mid-November. He gave William seven to 10 days that were crucial. Why?

The country also hesitated at first, but gradually important noblemen began to gravitate to William's camp. The first to go over was the king's own nephew, Edward Hyde, Viscount Cornbury. Then the lord's lieutenants, who'd been ordered to raise the militia, did so and marched it over to William. They received orders from London ("You're going to fight William"), but instead they marched the militia to William. Thus, the Stuarts' old problem with local control proved fatal once again.

The trickle became a flood between 23 and 25 November, when the king on two successive mornings woke up to find that he'd been deserted by Prince George of Denmark, his other son-in-law; John, Lord Churchill, his principal favorite and his military commander; and James Butler, Duke of Ormond, the leader of the most staunchly Royalist family in England.

On 26 November, he learned that his other daughter, Princess Anne, had escaped from Whitehall Palace in the dead of night, also with the intention of joining William. When he heard this, James lamented, "God help me, my own children have forsaken me."

At this point, James II realized that the jig was up and began to plan an escape. The king abandoned the army, returned quickly to London, put

Queen Mary Beatrice and the little prince on a boat for France, and on the night of 11 December 1688, he too attempted to flee. He asked not to be disturbed. He asked the Lord of the Bedchamber, who's usually supposed to sleep in the bedchamber with him, to sleep outside. He wanted to be alone. Then, he sneaked out another way.

He put on a disguise, but in the end, he managed to bungle even this escape. He dressed as a fisherman and went down to the coast hoping to catch a fishing boat to France. Of course, he was immediately recognized and returned to London. At this point, a few Tory peers begged him to stay, but James had made up his mind. After all, if you're William, do you really want James to stay?

Here's what William did. The Prince of Orange placed the king under house arrest, and then lodged him at Rochester. If you look at a map, Rochester is on the far-east coast. It's where Charles II landed at his Restoration. It's about as close to France as you can get. He made sure—and remember James is not the brightest of the Stuart bulbs—to explain to James that, “The front door will be very heavily guarded, your majesty—the front door.”

James figured it out, and he was able to make his escape to France on 23 December 1688. The Restoration Settlement was at an end.

What to put in its place? What would the Revolution Settlement look like? The Great Chain of Being had been broken for the second time in a generation and, of course, chaos loomed. Londoners panicked over alleged raids by Irish soldiers. There weren't any, but nevertheless the rumor flew. In response, they burned and looted the property of known Catholics—logical response.

On 24 December 1688, an assembly of 60 peers petitioned William to administer the realm until a settlement could be worked out. The House of Lords takes action. On 26 December (you have to take a day off for Christmas), 300 former MPs and London civic leaders concur. Basically, what's left of James's old Parliament is asking William to run the country temporarily.

This group agreed to elections for another Convention Parliament, which met on 22 January 1689 to figure out what to do about the Crown of England. It soon divided along party lines, as you would expect. Tories, dedicated to divine right and the hereditary succession, raised on passive obedience and non-resistance to the rightful sovereign, and feeling highly conflicted about their role in the Revolution, were desperate to come up with some settlement—some jury-rigged settlement—which would preserve their principles of hereditary succession. Some actually stood up in Parliament and argued that James II was still the “one true king,” but maybe William could be his regent. Nobody believed that James would agree. Others suggested that Mary, as the rightful heir (if you believe the warming pan story), should be named queen. At this William replied, “I will not be my wife’s gentleman usher.”

Whigs, on the other hand, had no qualms about the Revolution. They believed in parliamentary sovereignty. They believed in the contractual basis of government and the right of revolt against a bad king. Locke would publish his *Second Treatise* within a year. Therefore, they saw no problem with simply saying that James had violated his contract with the English people by failing to preserve their liberty—that is their liberty to oppress papists and Dissenters—and failing to preserve their property—their local offices. He’d been rightly deposed and Parliament, as the people’s representative, had every right to make a new contract with the Prince of Orange. They saw no problem with simply naming William as king.

In short, the Tory position was romantic and emotional. The Whig position was rational, practical, and untraditional. In the end, in a revolution, he who has the guns makes the rules. William basically made clear that if they didn’t make him king, he would pick up his army and go home, leaving England to the kind of chaos that it had seen between 1649 and 1653.

At this point, Parliament worked out a compromise. First, it voted that James had abdicated the throne, which was of course a complete lie. Then, on 13 February 1689, in the Banqueting House at Whitehall (the scene of Charles I’s execution), William and Mary were offered the Crown by Parliament jointly, but with administrative power to be vested in William. The actual deed of grant says that. At the same time, the new king and queen were



presented with a Declaration of Rights. This document retailed the horrors of the previous reign and then stated that no king of England could tax without parliamentary permission, use the suspending power, abuse the dispensing power, manipulate the judiciary, or continue a standing army without parliamentary permission.

It also reasserted the subjects' right to permission for redress of grievances and the necessity of free elections. It's important not to confuse this document with an American-style Bill of Rights, which articulates individual freedoms. In many respects, this is a weaker document. In fact, historians have debated over the significance of this document ever since.

The basic question is this: Is this a contract? In other words, are William and Mary being offered the Crown on a contractual basis? William wanted no part of that. He made sure that the offer of the Crown came before the document was read. William could take the position that, "I never agreed to that, or at least I didn't agree to it in order to become king."

In any case, the Declaration of Rights is highly ambiguous. James had, in fact, never levied an unparliamentary tax. It was Parliament that had given him all that money freely. What constituted abusing the dispensing power or manipulating the judiciary were, of course, matters of opinion: "Don't do it like James did."

In any case, it really doesn't matter. What does matter is that for the first time in English history, Parliament had chosen the sovereign. The reigns of William III and Mary II had begun.

Which raises quite a few questions: What did all this mean? Why did this series of events become known as the Glorious Revolution? Why did English men and women subsequently see the Glorious Revolution of 1688–1689 as maybe the watershed event in their history? Why do English history courses often break in 1688? (Clearly, ours won't.)

First, the glory; then I'll explain the significance. The Revolution of 1688–1689 was thought of as glorious, by the Protestant ruling elite at least, for the following reasons. It was glorious first of all because there was no bloodshed,

unless you want to count James's unshakable nose. Admittedly, as we'll see, there would be bloodshed in Ireland and Scotland, but of course, nobody in England thought of that.

It was glorious because, despite the confusion at the time, in retrospect, when you look back on it, it seems so orderly, easy, inevitable, and above all, God-ordained. After all, it happened in that magical year of 1688, a century after the Armada. William's landing was facilitated by another Protestant wind. It took place on the same date as the discovery of the Gunpowder Plot—another deliverance.

Contemporaries marveled at how quickly James's house-of-cards Catholic regime had collapsed, as if it was God's will. All of it occurred without the sort of messy social revolution that had accompanied 1649.

Thus, the Revolution of 1688–1689 was glorious because, unlike '42–'60, the ruling class engineered a political revolution in their own interests without a social one. This time the ruling elite remained in charge. The lower orders did what they were told. Remember, I told you that the lords lieutenants raised the militia and just marched it over to William. The militiamen obeyed. There were no Levellers, Ranters, or Fifth Monarchy Men coming out of the woodwork to push their weird radical utopias. In fact, the descendants of those people worked for this Revolution.

Scotland and Ireland remained quiet, relatively speaking; therefore, the subordinate links of the Great Chain of Being held. All this added up to more proof in Protestant eyes that God was a Protestant Englishman.

Of course, what struck contemporaries as glorious now strikes us as arrogant, smug, Anglo-centric, bigoted, and snobbish. After all, we might ask from the viewpoint of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, what was so glorious about a revolution that was perpetrated in defense of religious intolerance, did nothing for the great mass of ordinary people, tightened the stranglehold of the landed elite (that upper two percent on power) and led eventually to the further subordination of Ireland and certain elements in Scot society? In fact, when the anniversary of 1688 came up in 1988, these criticisms were all aired.

Yet, politically correct as I am, I would argue that even given the above criticisms their very substantial due, the Revolution of 1688–1689 can still be seen as glorious because it offered progressive answers to most of the questions that had beset the Stuarts for nearly a century. Those answers came to have a positive influence on the world well beyond England’s shores. Put simply, the Glorious Revolution of 1688–1689 represented England’s final break with the medieval past and with the Great Chain of Being, and its first important embrace of modernity and modernity’s social, constitutional, and religious implications.

Take sovereignty. Contemporaries didn’t want to admit it, but clearly Parliament was now sovereign. After all, the Convention Parliament of 1689 had called itself into existence, had debated the succession, had taken the Crown from King James (albeit under cover of a fictional abdication), ignored Prince James, and simply voted that it goes to William and Mary.

Then, despite Anne’s superior claim to William, it mapped out a succession with her cooperation that would go to his children. Anne agreed, and Parliament just diverted the succession, because it would have been too messy to then have it go to Anne if William died but had had children.

Admittedly, contemporaries weren’t comfortable with any of this. They preferred to think of it as a one-time emergency measure, and then we go back to hereditary succession. In fact, by the end of the decade, William and Mary and Anne and George would prove unable to have living children, and Parliament would again have to figure out the succession. They did that in the Act of Settlement of 1701. In doing so, they would flout the laws of hereditary succession, and so the notion that God appoints kings, by banning Catholics from the throne in the Act of Settlement (1701). We’ll come back to it in a couple of lectures.

When they drew this piece of legislation, they skipped over scores of Catholics with better claims to award the succession after Anne to the German Protestant Electors of Hanover. They were descendants of James I’s unfortunate daughter Elizabeth, the one who married the Elector Rhine-Palatine. That was many lectures back.

In other words, Parliament said, “Right, there’s all these Catholics with a claim to the throne, but they don’t get it. We’re going to give it to the nearest Protestant, even though by some counts, he or she is maybe 50<sup>th</sup> or more on the list.” No wonder that one of William and Mary’s subjects, invited to drink their health in 1690, instead hoisted one to, “Our sovereign lord, the people, for we can make a king and queen when we please.”

It’s important not to go overboard here. English kings remain powerful. Most of the king’s executive powers remain intact. He can still make peace and war, choose ministers, and set policy, but as we’ll see, after 1689, his financial and diplomatic situation would dictate that he couldn’t do that without Parliament. That meant, in turn, that he had to choose ministers with whom Parliament could work. That would inevitably constrain the king’s freedom of action.

In other words, what I’m arguing is that in 1688, thanks to 1688–1689, England was well on its way to being a constitutional monarchy.

Of course, William didn’t come to England to make it a constitutional monarchy. He came to acquire another ally in his crusade against Louis XIV, which brings me to foreign policy. William’s accession more or less solves the foreign policy question. England—indeed the British kingdoms—are now going to fight for the European balance of power against France.

By the way, from now on in the course, I’m going to be using the words “Britain” and the “British kingdoms” more often because a lot of the rest of the course is about this foreign policy, and we’re really talking about England, Scotland, and Ireland together combining their resources against France.

In fact, the ensuing Nine Years’ War would be the first of seven colossal conflicts fought between Britain and France between 1688 and 1815. These wars would stretch British resolve; the British economy; and the British administrative, political, and social systems to their utmost. They were wars, in a sense, almost to the death. Remember that up to this point, the three kingdoms had played a small and mostly pretty inept role in European affairs. Remember that France was a much larger and wealthier nation, its

population three times that of England and Scotland, when these wars began. Remember that given English and French interests in the Americas and Asia, these would be world wars.

The British kingdoms would rise to the challenge. They would win or draw six of those wars, and they would emerge on the field of Waterloo in 1815 the most powerful military state with the greatest overseas empire, and therefore the richest country on earth—so much for the problem of foreign policy.

Of course, to do that, they'd have to solve the problem of government finance, because obviously these wars are going to be pretty expensive. The first, and the cheapest one, is going to cost £4 million a year—that's twice James II's annual revenue. Obviously, whatever the constitutional implications of the Revolution, the king would have to call Parliament frequently. In fact, it's from 1689 that Parliament meets annually every year. There's never been a break. It was the wars, not the succession question, that made Parliament a permanent perennial part of the English Constitution.

Parliament would do its part. It would raise unprecedented sums in taxation, but this wouldn't be enough. The necessities of war would force the government to learn how to tap new wealth. They would have to tap the Commercial Revolution. They would have to exploit government credit creatively. They would have to find new methods of debt management and funding. They would create new expedients—like lotteries, annuities, and government bonds. These new institutions would be managed by other new institutions, like the Bank of England.

Thus, the Glorious Revolution and the Commercial Revolution would give birth to a financial revolution, which would make the Crown fabulously wealthy. When I say “the Crown,” I mean the government. I don't mean the king. Part of what happens after 1688 and the shift in sovereignty is that people begin to think of the king and his household as separate from his majesty's government. The king and his household are paid out of a limited fund called the “civil list” after 1698. His majesty's government, despite that title, is increasingly seen as a public trust.

In any case, all this money would, in turn, make possible a reformed, expanded, and, by 18<sup>th</sup> century standards, efficient central administration. That central administration would recruit, transport, and maintain vast armies and mighty fleets that would win the wars, which would bring more colonies, which would bring more money, which would pay for even bigger armies and navies, which would win more wars, etc, etc. More about that in the rest of the lectures of this course. It's a lot to hit you with now.

In the meantime, wouldn't Henry VII and Henry VIII have been astounded at what they'd started? After all, you could argue that this all goes back to Henry VII trying to stop the Wars of the Roses by taming the barons, and Henry VIII trying to avoid another Wars of the Roses by taming the barons by switching the religion of the nation in order to get a son.

That issue of religion, of course, was the one over which the Revolution was fought. Remember, English men and women didn't revolt because they wanted a new constitutional settlement; a war with France; or a wealthier, more powerful government—certainly not. They revolted because James II, enabled by his vast constitutional powers, was threatening the Protestant ascendancy. What now?

Clearly, a few things are settled. England will not be Catholic. However, this didn't mean that it would return to the religious status quo. Anglicans in Parliament were forced to recognize that most Dissenters had stayed loyal to Protestantism, even when James had offered a toleration in the Declaration of Indulgence. Dissenting goldsmith bankers had helped bankroll William's invasion, so in effect, the Dissenters had wiped away a lot of the stain of 1649. You'll note that they'd opposed a king again, but this time the whole country agreed with them, so it was okay.

Parliament also had to recognize that William III, being a Dutch Calvinist, was theologically a Dissenter himself. It wouldn't do to turn the king into a criminal, so the Cavalier Code (Clarendon Code) will have to go. In 1689, Parliament passed the Act of Toleration. All Protestant churches were to be tolerated, except those of Socinians. Socinians deny the Trinity. The Cavalier Code was repealed, except for the Test Act, which remained on the books.

That is, for the first time since the civil wars and now permanently, the English state abandoned the idea that every English subject has to be a member of the English State Church to be a good subject.

You will respond to me that, “This is a pretty narrow toleration.” James would have had a much broader toleration. Catholics are still outlaws. Non-Anglican Protestants are still second-class citizens. They’re still subject to the Test Act: If they want to serve in government, they have to take Anglican communion once a year. They have to register their meetinghouses with the government. They have to keep the doors unlocked when they have meetings, because Anglicans still think the Dissenters are up to no good.

Nevertheless, can we agree that there was something new and modern about English men and women of different religious traditions agreeing to live more or less in peace? Very gradually, the 18<sup>th</sup> century would be a century of toleration for Dissenters and, with the pressure off for Counter-Reformation, even Catholics would very largely enjoy a *de facto* toleration in the country. Neighbors would cease to suspect them quite so much. The penal laws would remain in force. They weren’t repealed until the 1830s, but they were enforced less and less.

Finally, there’s the issue that went back to Henry VII long before of local versus central control—the last big issue we haven’t talked about yet. It should be obvious that 1688–1689 proved that the landed aristocracy were as powerful as they’d ever been: “Don’t mess with our rights to be sheriffs and JPs. We’ll raise the militia, and we’ll march them over to the other guy.”

Note that the Revolution would also tie members of the local ruling elite to the Crown more closely. The big government that the wars are going to create? Everyone’s going to want a job in it. Parliament is going to meet annually. That means more and more local gentry MPs are going to have to spend time in London near the center of things. Those government lotteries that I talked about that are going to be used to pay for this war? A lot of those country gentlemen are going to invest in them. There’s a sense in which the Revolution does tie the locality closer to the center and solves some of these tensions that we’ve seen in previous lectures.

Finally, in the end, I would argue that the Glorious Revolution marks England's first real successful break from the Great Chain of Being and their entrance into a world with which we moderns would feel comfortable. Stop and think about what just happened here: English men and women had chosen a king. They were masters of their own property (that's the financial issue). They could choose their religion (alright, as long as it was Protestant). They could take on the might of France. They could run their localities as they saw fit.

As we'll see, they had accomplished all of this without looking back—without the intense hand-wringing of the Bishop of Carlisle in 1399. Some people are complaining about the Great Chain of Being breaking, but by and large the country moved on. There would be no subsequent disaster—no rerun of the Wars of the Roses to blame on this moment. No one would look back and say, “That's where we all went wrong. That's when the terrible stuff started to happen.”

It's typical of poor James that he's still stuck in the Middle Ages. He's so out of sync with his people that he doesn't get this. He thought that the country would be paralyzed without him. He thought that leaving was an act of revenge for this act of rebellion. That's why he threw the Great Seal of England into the Thames. He thought that without the Great Seal of England to affix to parliamentary statutes and grants of land, the country would grind to a halt.

You know what they did? They made another one. Having broken the Great Chain of Being, the people of England were not about to be stopped by the loss of some other medieval bauble.

In this lecture, England broke with its past by engaging in the Revolution of 1688–1689. The English people chose practicality and their loyalty to Protestantism over their devotion to the monarchy when they deposed James II and replaced him with William III and Mary II. That act not only broke the Great Chain of Being; its implications would solve all of the five major problems that had plagued the Stuart century.



As we'll see in the next lecture, those solutions would still have to be defended. That's why this isn't the end of the course. All of those solutions had powerful enemies. Fortunately, the English had at their disposal vast untapped resources. Having broken their chains, the people of England would now begin to flex their muscles.

# King William's War: 1689–92

## Lecture 40

When the “immortal seven” invited William of Orange to invade England, they did so primarily to safeguard the rights of Parliament in the constitution and the Protestant ascendancy in religion. They probably failed to realize that in doing so, they were committing British arms and resources to full-scale war with France.

The major problem facing William and Mary at the beginning of the reign was to convince the English people that the Nine Years' War was their war, that Louis's embrace of the Jacobite cause represented a danger, not just to the peace of Europe, but to the English way of life. This was a hard sell because there was no love lost for the Dutch, England's great ally in the war, the English had such a poor record in Continental wars, and the war would be fabulously expensive. Worse, William and Mary were viewed by many as usurpers. Jacobites (mostly Tories) worked actively for their overthrow. Non-jurors (mostly Tory clergymen) would not be active against them but refused to serve under them.

Most people were ambivalent, caring neither for William nor James. Mary was the “acceptable face” of the regime to many. She was a Stuart, James's daughter, and, thus, the true heir (if one ignored Prince James). Many Tories felt loyalty to her that they could not feel for William. Some urged her to be more assertive, but she remained subordinate to William. She was English-born, pious, pretty, and charitable. This endeared her to the English people. She was vivacious, fun-loving, a promoter of the arts, and a frequent host of “drawing rooms” at court. This revived court life and brought the aristocracy back to Whitehall. When Mary died suddenly of smallpox in December 1694, the country was plunged into grief comparable to that for Princess Diana in 1997.

William alone was never popular. One way to understand this is to contrast him with his uncle, Charles II. Both men were highly intelligent, but William was taciturn, expending his brainpower on strategy and tactics, not witty repartee. Unlike Charles II, William was hard-working and driven by

his obsession with stopping Louis XIV. Unlike Charles II, William hated crowds, court social occasions, and similar events. He was more at home in army camps than in drawing rooms. He was more comfortable with his Dutch officers and favorites than with English politicians.

As a result, William III never quite understood the English party system. One might assume that he would be drawn to the Whigs as natural supporters of the Revolution and war against Catholic France. But William saw the Whigs as republican radicals who might just as easily turf him out as they had his father-in-law. He gravitated to the Tories, whom he saw as defenders of monarchy and the natural, experienced party of government. Unfortunately, although many Tories did support the Revolution, many others were Jacobites. It took years for William to figure this out.

The war began when King James, supported by a handful of French ships and soldiers, invaded Ireland in the spring of 1689. James was welcomed in Catholic Ireland because he promised to stop centuries of English misrule. He immediately convened an Irish Parliament to revoke the Restoration land settlement and to emancipate Catholics. But James had no intention of liberating Ireland from English control. What he wanted was to use it as a base from which to regain England. Nevertheless, poor Catholic Irish farmers joined his army in droves.

That spring, James's forces took the Protestant ruling class by surprise, conquering all but the enclaves of Londonderry and Enniskillen in the north (Ulster). Protestants held out there until a Williamite relief force arrived in July 1689. The following summer, William III arrived at the head of an Anglo-Dutch army and defeated King James's forces at the Battle of the Boyne on 1 July 1690.

Following the final Irish surrender at Limerick in 1691, William supported leniency for the Catholic Irish, but he needed the Protestant ruling class in Ireland to fight his war, and they wanted revenge. Over the next 40 years,

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**James had no intention of liberating Ireland from English control. What he wanted was to use it as a base from which to regain England.**

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English monarchs would allow the Protestant-dominated Irish Parliament to pass a series of harsh laws called the Penal Code. The Catholic Irish were forbidden from voting, holding office, sitting in Parliament, attending university, practicing law, purchasing land, bearing arms or wearing swords (a mark of gentility), and owning a horse worth over £5. They were forced to divide bequests among all their heirs, thus leading to the gradual elimination of large land holdings. As a result, by 1727, the Catholic Irish amounted to four-fifths of the population but owned one-seventh of the land. No wonder that William's victory at the Boyne continues to rankle Catholic Irish even as it is celebrated by their Protestant countrymen.

Despite William's victory in Ireland, the overall situation in 1690–1692 remained grim. Louis XIV's armies were victorious on the Continent. In June 1690, Louis's navy beat an Anglo-Dutch fleet at Beachy Head, thus opening England to invasion. Parliament launched a series of divisive inquiries into the course of the war and how the money allotted for it was being spent. These inquiries and the conduct of the war pointed out a fundamental shift in the respective roles of the parties after the Revolution.

The Tories were living a number of contradictions after 1688–1689: They were the party of divine-right monarchy, yet they were serving a usurper. They were the party of Anglicanism, yet they were ruled by a Dutch Calvinist king who had brought with him a toleration for Dissenters. They were the party of peaceful isolationism and friendship with France, yet they were fighting a war against that country. They were the party of the landed aristocracy, yet to pay for the war, they had been forced to approve a land tax of four shillings in the pound. Worse, in 1692, a number of Tory peers, including John Churchill, now Earl of Marlborough, were discovered to have corresponded with James II, promising their support if he should return.

Whigs, on the other hand, were perfectly content with the state of the post-revolutionary political world. The party of parliamentary sovereignty had no problem with William's legitimacy. The party of the Dissenters embraced the toleration. The party that hated and feared Catholic France saw every reason to fight the war. The party of merchants and financiers—many of whom did well off war contracts—had no difficulty with a land tax. William began to appoint Whigs to government office. The Whigs, born in opposition, became

the party of the court and government. The Tories, the natural party of the court and government, became an opposition party. This shift would change the nature of the English monarchy and constitution. The Tories had been the party of the court because they believed passionately, even irrationally, in the Great Chain of Being, divine right, and their Stuart sovereigns. For the Whigs, William was more of a CEO than God's lieutenant. They supported him because it suited their purposes, not because they loved him or saw him as the father of the country. They would fight and win King William's war. But they would demand an extension of Parliament's power and role in the constitution. ■

### Suggested Reading

Bucholz and Key, *Early Modern England*, chap. 10, secs. 1–3.

Coward, *Stuart Age*, chap. 12.

Hoppit, *Land of Liberty?* chap. 4, secs. 1–2; chap. 5, secs. 1–4.

Kishlansky, *Monarchy Transformed*, chap. 12.

### Questions to Consider

1. Why did the English have such trouble seeing King William's war as their fight?
2. Why did the Whigs fail to revere William as the Tories did the Stuarts?

# King William's War: 1689–92

## Lecture 40—Transcript

In the last lecture, we saw England take the plunge into revolution, toss King James out of the country, break the Great Chain of Being, and embrace the Revolution of 1688–1689. As we argued, that event had a profound effect on the constitutional, political, social, and religious situation of the British Isles, as subsequent lectures should make clear.

To most of the subjects of William and Mary, the Revolution's immediate significance was that it got them into a war. This lecture begins by explaining why the war was a necessary corollary to the Revolution, as well as what was at stake. As we'll see, the personalities of William III and Mary II were not perfectly calibrated to make this case. In this lecture, we'll explore those personalities and try to figure out why the English liked Mary but not William. As we'll see, he was temperamentally attracted to the Tories, but he and his war were more enthusiastically supported by the Whigs.

Next, we turn to the war itself, beginning with the re-conquest of Ireland. That campaign reconfirmed the Protestant ascendancy in the island, but it also exposed the strengths and weaknesses of the new regime. In its aftermath, William bowed to political necessity and settled on a Whig ministry to fight his war. When the "immortal seven" invited William of Orange to invade England, they did so primarily to safeguard the rights of Parliament in the constitution and the Protestant ascendancy in religion. They probably failed to realize that in doing so, they were committing British arms and resources to full-scale war with France. This war would eventually come to be known as the Nine Years' War.

War was likely first because King James still lived and still had diehard supporters in England. Old Tories in particular had trouble abandoning their loyalty to the "one true king," despite their countervailing loyalty to the Anglican Church. These people would be known as "Jacobites." This group would work underground to restore the king. War became inevitable when Louis XIV decided to embrace the Jacobite cause. If he doesn't, then James doesn't really have a base of operations. Louis supported James first as a

fellow monarch. To tolerate William's usurpation abroad would send a signal of weakness at home.

Second, Louis supported James as a fellow Catholic who'd lost his kingdom for the faith. Finally, Louis could not stand idly by as William took the British kingdoms into the Dutch column in the great struggle over the balance of power in Europe and the fate of the Spanish Empire. Conversely, war was necessary from William's point of view to preserve the Revolution Settlement and the throne that it had given him; to maintain the Anglo-Dutch alliance; to preserve the territorial integrity of the Dutch Republic, which remember was always under threat from Louis; and to stop Louis XIV from becoming the master of Europe.

The major problem facing William and Mary at the beginning of the reign was to convince the English people that this war was their war—that Louis represented a danger not just to the peace of Europe, but to the English way of life. In other words, William had to convince the English people that Louis and his pal James still threatened Parliament and still threatened Protestantism. This was a hard sell. There was no love lost between the Dutch and the English. You'll remember that they'd fought in three previous wars, and they were trading rivals. Don't forget too that the English had a poor record in continental wars.

The war would be fabulously expensive. Everyone understood that in 1688–1689. William III and Mary II were perhaps not well fitted to make the case. The very name William and Mary reminds us from the start that the new regime rested on an unusual and precarious constitutional foundation. The new king was not the rightful heir of the previous sovereign. Indeed, his predecessor was still alive. The new queen was the old king's heir, but not the heir apparent, unless one ignored the “heir inconvenient,” Prince James, who, following the warming pan myth, was already being called the “Pretender” by Whigs.

Mary had no constitutional power according to the offer of the Crown of 13 February 1689. Above all, William and Mary were viewed by many people as usurpers. Remember that the English people had been preached to for centuries about the Great Chain of Being and hereditary monarchy. I

know in the last lecture I said that the English had broken the Great Chain of Being, but that doesn't mean that everybody woke up one day and realized that that was true. In particular, in the wake of the civil wars, and bearing in mind the example of the execution of Charles I, people had been taught that only the hereditary monarch was the true king. To resist him was a grave sin; to overthrow him an even graver one. Thus, Jacobites, mostly Tories, whatever they thought of James personally, worked actively if secretly for his Restoration.

There was another group made up mostly of Anglican clergymen, who were known as "non-jurors." They wouldn't work for James—they didn't like him very much—but they would not swear allegiance to the new monarchs. On the other hand, the English people had been taught also that whomever occupied the throne currently was the de facto king and that he was entitled to at least passive obedience. That's about what William got: passive obedience. While most people saw the necessity of the Revolution and acknowledged William tacitly or on oath as king, few loved him. Few saw him, as they had seen Henry VIII or even Charles II, as God's lieutenant or the father of the country.

Here is where Mary II came in. She was the "acceptable face" of the revolutionary regime to many. After all, she was at least a real Stuart and the daughter of the previous king, though remember that William was also a Stuart on his mother's side. Many Tories felt an instinctive loyalty to Mary that they couldn't muster to William, because she had the right blood. During the early years of the reign, William often trusted her to administer the realm while he was away on campaign. During these regencies, Tories were constantly whispering in her ear, "You could take over. Come on. Be more assertive. You're the real queen." Mary wouldn't do it. She was loyal to her husband, and she seems to have had a very conventional view of the role of women in marriage.

Mary's significance to the regime lay elsewhere. It was symbolic. Mary was English-born, Anglican, pious, pretty, and charitable. All these qualities endeared her to the English people. Mary was also, when you got to know her, vivacious, fun-loving, and a promoter of the arts. She supervised Sir Christopher Wren's renovations of Hampton Court and Kensington Palace.



She commissioned birthday odes from Henry Purcell. She's an important patroness of the arts.

She also hosted frequent "drawing rooms." This is the 17<sup>th</sup> century equivalent of a cocktail party, except that there's no food and drink. They were held at court and were an opportunity for people to come to court. In fact, it could be argued that Mary revived court life and brought the aristocracy back to Whitehall. That was crucial to a new regime. Since William was busy with the war and had no time for such frippery, Mary fulfilled a crucial function in making the regime more popular. Therefore, when Mary II died suddenly of smallpox in December 1694, William and the country were plunged into grief fully comparable to that for Princess Diana in 1997. William staged a great state funeral. Henry Purcell was commissioned to write his magnificent funeral music, which was also played at Diana's funeral. Listen to this description of Lord Macaulay and see if it doesn't bring back memories of 1997:

The public sorrow was great and general, for Mary's blameless life, her large charities, and her winning manners had conquered the hearts of her people. When the Commons next met, many of the members had handkerchiefs at their eyes. The number of sad faces in the street struck every observer. The funeral was long remembered as the saddest and most august that Westminster had ever seen. While the queen's remains lay in state at Whitehall, the neighboring streets were filled every day from sunrise to sunset by crowds which made all traffic impossible.

Mary's untimely death was all the more lamentable because it left William alone with his people. William alone was never popular. One way to understand that is to contrast him with his uncle, Charles II. Both men were highly intelligent, but where Charles delighted his subjects with witty repartee, William expended his brainpower on the practical details of administration, diplomacy, strategy, and tactics. Where Charles II was lazy and indolent, William was hardworking and driven. Where Charles II seemed to have no long-term goals or plans, William was obsessed with forming a "Grand Alliance" to stop Louis XIV.

Where Charles II was a great entertainer and the first gentleman of the kingdom, William hated crowds and court social occasions. He was more at home in army camps than in drawing rooms. Early in the reign, William abandoned the Palace of Whitehall for intimate country palaces like Kensington and Hampton Court. If you've been to Kensington recently, you're probably shocked at me calling it a country palace, but in those days, London was not so built up that Kensington was in an urban area. The official reason for this move was the king's poor health. Again, unlike the vigorous Charles II, William was frail and asthmatic. He was a very small man, and he was sick a lot of the time. Whitehall and the West End, with their hundreds of chimneys and the dampness down by the river, were terrible for his health.

Whitehall was also not for William because it had a theater for entertaining, and it had over 1,400 rooms, which meant that he could put up many of those to be entertained. In fact, I don't want to give you the impression that William didn't like art. He was a cultivated connoisseur of the arts. Ironically, his tastes were French. He preferred static decorative art forms—painting, furniture, building, and gardens—to the performing arts like the theater and music, which involve people, human activity, contact, and often scandal. Actors and actresses can be scandalous, but it's really hard for a garden to be scandalous. William as a Dutch Calvinist preferred that.

He was more comfortable with his Dutch army officers and favorites than with English courtiers and politicians. The English courtiers complained that he was surrounded by people that he'd brought from the Netherlands who kept the English away. As a consequence, William came across to his subjects as cold and taciturn. The end result was perceptively and succinctly summed up by William himself: "I see that I am not made for this people, nor they for me."

Indeed, they never quite got his war or his obsession with France. It's true that the French were generally unpopular—just about everybody else was generally unpopular with the English—but so were the Dutch. In the experience of most Britons, foreign military adventures always meant high taxes, many casualties, and disappointing results. As we'll see, William's early campaigns did nothing to refute this. Above all, the British never really saw themselves as a European power. Rather, they clung to the island

mentality. What did they care about what Louis did? They were safe behind their moat defensive, the English Channel.

For his part, William III never quite got the English party system. If you've been following these lectures closely, you're probably going to assume that William was a Whig. They supported the Revolution, giving him the Crown, and his war against Catholic France. But William saw the Whigs as republican radicals who might just as easily turf him out as they had his father-in-law. Remember, Whigs believed in that contract. What if the Whigs decided one day that William had broken the contract? William naturally gravitated towards the Tories, whom he saw rightly as defenders of monarchy and the natural and experienced party of government. It was Tories who ran things for Charles II. As a result, his early administrations tended to be dominated by Tories. He brought Danby back and made him Marquis of Carmarthen and Lord President of the Council. He took Daniel Finch, Earl of Nottingham, an Anglican who was actually sympathetic with the non-jurors, and he made him a secretary of state. He took Sidney, Lord Godolphin, and brought him back as First Lord of the Treasury in 1690.

William was right. The Tories were defenders of monarchy. The trouble was that the monarch who many of them wanted to defend was James II. While many Tories did support the Revolution, others were secret Jacobites, hoping for a second Restoration. Some of these were members of William's government. It took some years and much hard fighting at the start of the war for William to figure that out.

The war began when King James, supported by a handful of French ships and soldiers, landed at Kinsale in the south of Ireland in spring 1689. Ireland must have seemed a very promising place from which to launch James's Restoration to the three British thrones. As you will recall, the majority Catholic population had been resisting English rule for centuries. As I hope you'll also recall, the most important result of that resistance was English oppression, in particular the plantations at the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The Cromwellian land settlement subsequently had left Catholics owning just 20 percent of the land in Ireland by 1660.

At the Restoration, Charles II's Lord Lieutenant, James, Duke of Ormond, tried to work out a compromise. Cromwellian soldiers were allowed to keep the land they confiscated if they paid compensation back to the previous owners. Stop and think about this—this is a recipe for lawsuits that would last for decades. This is a recipe for every side to feel some resentment, so it didn't quite work.

The fortunes of the Catholic Irish improved somewhat under James II and his Deputy Lieutenant, the Catholic Richard Talbot, Earl of Tyrconnel. Now we're back in the reign of James II. Tyrconnel filled the Irish army and magistracy with papists. By 1688, half of the Irish army was Catholic (that is, the army as it was based in Ireland). Tyrconnel also purged Protestant sheriffs, JPs, and judges. It's said that he confiscated every borough charter in Ireland and, using the king's dispensing power, just rewrote them.

Tyrconnel's policies clearly benefited James. Ireland was the only one of his three kingdoms that stayed loyal in '88. They also benefited the Irish Catholic aristocracy—the Old English—largely at the expense of their Protestant counterparts. James and Tyrconnel never actually did anything for the poor Irish peasants who made up the bulk of the population. It seemed like despite whoever sat on the English throne, they were pushed around.

From the Protestant point of view, James's return in '89 may have been a disaster. From the Catholic point of view, he still had a lot of work to do. Thus, James was welcomed in Catholic Ireland because he promised to undo centuries of English mistreatment of Catholics.

Now we're back in 1689, and he's landed. He immediately convenes an Irish Parliament—the "Patriot Parliament," as it came to be known among Catholics. He urged the Parliament to revoke the Restoration land settlement and to emancipate Catholics. I want to be careful here. James had no intention of emancipating Ireland from English control. James is not going to give Ireland independence. For example, he balked at repealing Poyning's Law, which subordinated the Dublin Parliament to the Parliament at Westminster. Nor did he plan to do much for the little people. What he wanted was to use Ireland as a base from which to regain England. Ireland is not his end; Ireland is his means.

Nevertheless, poor Catholic Irish farmers joined James's army in droves. This force was untrained and poorly armed, but it caught the Protestant land-owning class off guard. That spring, James's forces conquered all of the island but the enclaves of Londonderry and Enniskillen in the north (Ulster). In April, at Londonderry in a legendary move, Protestant apprentice boys shut the gates of Londonderry on James's army and waited for relief. By the time a Williamite relief force arrived in July of '89, thousands of Ulster men and women had died from disease and starvation.

In fact, the tide only really turned in Ireland in the summer of 1690. At that time, William himself arrived at the head of an Anglo-Dutch army of about 35,000 troops. From the opening of the campaign, the king has this English army, but who are they? They're the leftovers from the army he had brought from the Netherlands (mostly Dutch with some English Whigs), but also what's left of James's old army, and he doesn't trust them. From the first, the English are upset that he's clearly favoring his Dutch officers. Of course, these are the ones he knows he can trust. This was bad politics, but it was good military strategy. The two armies—James's and William's—met on the banks of the Boyne River, north of Dublin, on 1 July 1690. William, parading before his troops before the battle, was almost killed by a cannonball, but he refused to dismount and move to the rear. William of Orange was a man of great physical courage. He demonstrated that on several occasions.

Once the battle was joined, it was a rout. William has a real army; James has tenant farmers with hoes, shovels, and picks. They break and they run—and so does James. His nosebleed started gushing again. He abandoned his army in the field. Nothing works for this man. He fled back to France, never again to return to his British dominions. Catholic Irish forces held out until July 1691, when they surrendered according to the lenient terms of the Treaty of Limerick. I'll come back to that issue of leniency in a moment.

William's victory saved the revolution and confirmed the Protestant ascendancy in Ireland, but it was the ultimate disaster—at least until the famine—for the Catholic Irish population. The reason I want to spend some time on this is I want to make clear that William himself supported leniency for the Catholic Irish. William would be shocked at the way his memory has been hijacked by people who don't want to give equality to Catholics

in the current situation in Northern Ireland. He himself wanted to create an Ireland that would be friendly for people of both religions, but he needed the Protestant ruling class in Ireland to fight his war, and they wanted revenge.

Over the next 40 years, William and subsequent English monarchs would allow the Protestant-dominated Irish Parliament to pass a series of harsh laws called the Penal Code. According to the Penal Code, the Catholic Irish were forbidden from voting, holding office, sitting in Parliament, attending university, practicing law, purchasing land, inheriting it from Protestants, bearing arms or wearing swords (a sign of gentility, but also a way to defend yourself), or owning a horse worth more than £5.

The Catholic Irish were forced by law to divide bequests among all their heirs. That's called "partible inheritance." It's the opposite of primogenitor. You know what that means: The largest Catholic estates over several generations would get smaller and smaller and smaller. Gradually, every Catholic in Ireland would become poor. As a result, by 1727, the Catholic Irish, amounting to four-fifths of the population of Ireland, owned but one-seventh of the land. They were well on their way to a miserable penury.

This does not mean that the government at Westminster treated the Irish Protestants as equal. Poyning's Law remained in effect and was tightened by the Act of Westminster of 1714. The Dublin Parliament can't do anything unless the English Parliament says that it can. Irish trade was restricted and taxed so as to benefit the English.

In some ways, the 18<sup>th</sup> century would be the most miserable in Irish history. No wonder that in 1729, Jonathan Swift made the satirical suggestion in *A Modest Proposal* that the English, "Having sought to liquidate the Catholic Irish in any case, might as well eat their children." No wonder that in Ireland today the memory of William's relief of Ulster and the victory at the Boyne continues to rankle with Irish-Catholics as it is celebrated tauntingly, and from William's point of view inappropriately, by Ulster Protestants.

William's victory in Ireland gave the English a moment of relief, but the overall situation in 1690–1692 remained pretty grim. Louis's armies were still on the rampage in Europe. In June 1690, Louis's navy beat an Anglo-

Dutch fleet at the battle of Beachy Head. For the first time in a generation, the English had lost control of the English Channel and England lay open to invasion.

Parliament launched a series of inquiries into the course of the war at this point and the money allotted for it: “Something’s wrong here. We’ve got to figure out what.” At times, William found himself doubting the resolve and loyalty of his subjects, especially his Tory subjects.

That brings me to a discussion about the parties and their relationship to this war. In fact, Parliament’s inquiries into the conduct of the war pointed out a fundamental shift in the respective role of the two parties after the Revolution. Stop and think about what it means to be a Tory after the Revolution of 1688–1689. The very act that established this new regime went against everything that you believed in. Tories were the part of divine-right monarchy, yet they were serving a usurper. Tories were the party of high Anglicanism, yet they were ruled by a Dutch Calvinist who brought with him a toleration for Dissenters. Tories were the party of peaceful isolationism and friendship with France, yet they were fighting a war against that country.

Tories were the party of the landed aristocracy, yet to pay for the war against France, they’d had to vote a land tax of four shillings in the pound. Twenty shillings make a pound, which means that if your land is worth £100, then you’re paying £20 to the government. You’re paying a fifth of your income to the government because of this tax. Was it any wonder that Tory administrators seemed to be halfhearted or incompetent in their pursuit of the war?

William was very displeased that Tories in Parliament tended to favor a “blue-water” strategy à la Drake. The idea behind the blue-water strategy is let’s send the Royal Navy out and attack some French colonies. This would be relatively free of risk to English troops, and it would be cheap. William saw that strategy as cowardly and defeatist. He wanted to take the war to Louis on the continent with big armies, but of course, big armies require big payments of money from Parliament.

William's suspicions about the Tories were confirmed when, in 1692, a number of Tory peers including John Churchill, now Earl of Marlborough, were discovered to have corresponded with James II, promising their support if he made a return. Let me qualify that almost everybody wrote to James at some point: "That whole 1688 thing was a big mistake. Really, I'm on your side. Anything you want me to do—you show up off the coast, I'm there for you, James." This was insurance. Marlborough almost certainly wasn't a Jacobite.

But look at it from William's point of view. When he finds this stuff out, William is fighting for his life. He's fighting for the Revolution. He's fighting for the Dutch Republic, and maybe for the survival of international Protestantism. He couldn't look the other way. He sent Marlborough to the Tower, and he began to fire Tories and replace them with Whigs.

Look at the post-revolutionary world from a Whig point of view. The Whigs were perfectly happy with the post-revolutionary world. If the Revolution presented the Tories with conflict and contradiction, it solved any contradictions that the Whigs may have brought into 1688–1689. Whigs were the party of parliamentary sovereignty. They had no problem with William's legitimacy. Whigs were the party of the Dissenters. They embraced the toleration. Whigs hated and feared Catholic France. They loved the war and agreed with the need for a Grand Alliance to fight it.

Whigs were the party of some landowners, but they were also the party of merchants and financiers, many of who were getting rich off of government contracts for this war, so they had no trouble with the land tax. In fact, at this point, there's a shift: Many Whig country landowners began to move over to the Tory party.

As William began to appoint Whigs to government office, a seismic shift takes place in the roles and composition of these two parties. Remember, the Tories were supposed to be the natural party of the court and government, and now they've become an opposition party. They're turning into a country party. The Whigs were born as a country party—as a radical opposition party opposed to the court—and now they're becoming the party of the court and



the government. By the way, this confuses historians who work on the reign of William to no end.

These changes come with an important difference in emphasis. I want to stress to you that this isn't a simple one-to-one exchange because the Tories and the Whigs go about being parties of government very differently. As you'll recall, the Tories had been the party of the court because they believed passionately, even irrationally, in the Great Chain of Being, divine right, and their Stuart sovereign. During the civil wars and protectorate, many Tories were Royalists, or their parents had been Royalists. They lost maybe their lives, lands, or fortunes for this romantic attachment to the Stuarts.

A good many lost the latter too a second time in 1688, because many Tories fled abroad with King James. Those who stayed sometimes risked all three to become Jacobite plotters against the Williamite regime.

These people were not stupid. They knew that Charles II was an irresponsible libertine. They knew that James II was a shortsighted martinet, but they revered and followed them anyway, because for Tories, there was something magical and heart stirring about the name of "king" that only God could bestow.

Whigs didn't see it that way. Whigs felt no such affection for William, because they felt no such reverence for that title, which they knew very well that they, not God, had given him. If Whigs believed passionately in anything, it was the need to defend Protestantism and the rights of Parliament. They too came from families that had lost much during the struggles of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, but those families had fought for the rights of Parliament and for a particular vision of Protestantism. William was their chosen king not because of who he was or what his birth was, but because he defended those principles. In other words, he was king more for what he did than who he was. That's a very modern idea, isn't it? The person gets the job for what they do, not for their birth.

For Whigs, therefore, William's selection in 1689 was a practical business proposition. He was more of a CEO than God's lieutenant. Though many Whigs would develop affection for him, they supported him first and

foremost because it suited their purposes, not because they loved him or saw him as the father of the country. The Whigs would work hard. They would fight, and they would win King William's war, but they would exact a price. They would want an extension of Parliament's power and role in the constitution in order to do so. Since William was himself a practical man, far more interested in beating Louis than he was in the English Constitution, he'd give in. This war born of the Revolution would extend the trend of the Revolution towards making England a constitutional monarchy.

In this lecture, we saw that in choosing revolution and naming William and Mary as their joint sovereigns, the English people may have bought more than they bargained for, namely a general European war against France. We saw that William in particular was not well suited to make the case for the war, nor was the Tory party—whom he favored—well-disposed to fight it. After the mixed success of the early years of the reign (victory in Ireland, defeat at sea), William chose to appoint a Whig ministry.

In the next lecture, the Whigs will win King William's war and change the face of Europe.

# King William's War: 1692–1702

## Lecture 41

**The Whigs gave William a formidable war ministry, in particular one that was able to tap England's growing commercial wealth. The result would be a successful conclusion to the war with the Treaty of Ryswick of 1697. That put a stop—temporarily—to Louis XIV's territorial ambitions. Ironically, the country would react to this good news by turning back towards the Tories.**

**T**he Whig leaders proved to be competent war ministers. They worked so well together that they became known as the “Junto” (from the Spanish *junta*). Its members included the five men described below. Thomas Wharton, from 1696, Lord Wharton, Comptroller of the Household, was a brilliant parliamentary orator, a great landowner who controlled the votes of numerous tenants and, therefore, several MPs, and a famous rake, possibly the greatest swordsman/duelist of his age. Sir John Somers, from 1693, Lord Keeper of the Great Seal, from 1697, Lord Somers and Lord Chancellor of England, was a brilliant lawyer who drafted key legislation, such as the Declaration of Rights and also something of a rake and literary patron. Charles Spencer, later Earl of Sunderland, was (eventually) an expert on foreign policy and connected to the Earl of Marlborough through his marriage to Anne Churchill. Admiral Edward Russell, from 1694, First Lord of the Admiralty and, from 1697, Earl of Orford. Russell defeated the French fleet at La Hogue in 1692. This eliminated the threat of invasion and allowed William to take the war to Louis on the Continent. As first lord, he reformed the Royal Navy, building new ships and updating the dockyards. But the most important member of the Junto was Charles Montagu, First Lord of the Treasury from 1692, Chancellor of the Exchequer from 1694, and Lord Halifax from 1697. He launched the “Financial Revolution” that enabled England to win the war.

The Nine Years' War was the most expensive in English history to date, trebling total government expenditure to about £5 million a year. Louis raised funds easily, because he had no Parliament with which to deal. Rather, he simply taxed the French peasantry at will. William did have to deal with

a Parliament, which only reluctantly voted him a land tax of four shillings in the pound in 1693. This source was estimated to yield £2 million a year, at most. Because it was assessed and collected by the landowners themselves, it never actually reached the estimated yield. Montagu's idea was to tap England's growing commercial wealth. He established a fund out of the land tax to service loans made to the government, thus initiating England's funded national debt. He offered government annuities at 14 percent interest in return for loans of quick cash. (The principal would be paid back only in peacetime.) He established government-sponsored lotteries. He established the Bank of England, which acted as an investment opportunity for subscribers, a source of loans for the government, and a sort of federal reserve to regulate the money supply.

The resultant Financial Revolution had far-reaching effects. To secure Parliamentary approval for these initiatives, William had to make concessions: In 1691, he agreed to a parliamentary Commission of Accounts to examine his expenditure. In 1694, he agreed to another, stricter Triennial Act. In 1701, he agreed to limitations on royal power in the Act of Settlement (see below). Thus, the Financial Revolution helped advance the work of the Glorious Revolution in making England a constitutional monarchy.

The Financial Revolution enriched its investors, creating a new class of "moneyed men" who made money from credit. They embraced the Whigs and their very profitable war. Tories saw them as parasites, not least because the security for their speculative endeavors was the land tax. Thus, the Financial Revolution was yet one more force in English society destroying the Great Chain of Being.

William's government raised fabulous sums of money. This enabled him to field and supply Continental armies and far-flung fleets. In the long run, this wealth would make the English Crown (as opposed to the English monarch himself) fabulously wealthy and make England the greatest military power on earth. The British army grew to 76,000 men. The central administration increased from about 4,000 offices to over 12,000 between 1688 and 1725. Faced with fighting global wars (in Europe, in North America, and on the high seas), this administration grew more efficient and professional.

Unfortunately, the Junto lacked a general, and William was more brave than brilliant at strategy. But his unrelenting determination, combined with British superiority in men and materiel, finally ground Louis down. In 1697, he agreed to the Treaty of Ryswick. Louis recognized William III, not James II, as the King of England, Scotland, and Ireland. Louis restored nearly all the European territory he had conquered since 1678. Louis agreed to work out with William a partition of the Spanish Empire to take effect when Carlos II died.

After the peace, the Whig government broke up because of internal jealousies and a reaction in the country toward peace, low taxes, and the Tories. A Country-Tory ministry and Parliament led by Robert Harley repudiated the policies of the Junto. They demobilized William's army and sent home his Dutch Guards. They confiscated lands William had given to Dutch and English favorites. They impeached Whig ministers. But their most notable achievement was the passage of the Act of Settlement in 1701.

In 1700, Princess Anne's last surviving child, the Duke of Gloucester, died. In determining the succession after the childless William and Anne, Parliament skipped over scores of Catholic Stuarts to pick the nearest Protestant heir: Sophia, Electress of Hanover, and her son, George. Thus, Parliament once again opted for Protestantism and practicality over divine right and hereditary succession. The act also stipulated that, after Anne, no King of England was to leave the country without permission (as William had done), fight a war on behalf of some other territory that he ruled (such as William's Dutch Republic), or employ members of Parliament as government officials (as Danby and the Junto had done to ensure loyalty). Thus, the Act of Settlement was yet another stage on the road to constitutional monarchy.

In 1700–1702, the peace broke down. In October 1700, Carlos II of Spain finally died. His will ignored William's and Louis XIV's Partition Treaties, leaving the whole Spanish Crown and empire to Louis's grandson, Phillippe, Duke of Anjou. Louis now faced a dilemma: This was everything he had always wanted, but acceptance of the will might lead to war with William (that is, both the British and the Dutch). Louis took the gamble, proclaiming his grandson "Felipe V" of Spain. William began to prepare for war.

In November 1701, James II finally died. On his deathbed, he begged Louis XIV to recognize his son, Prince James, as the next King of England, Scotland, and Ireland. Once again, Louis faced a dilemma: Here was the deathbed request of an old friend, fellow monarch, and Catholic, but acceptance would surely lead to war with William, whom he would have to repudiate. Once again, Louis took the gamble, proclaiming the young prince “King James III” of England and Ireland and “James VIII” of Scotland. Parliament now voted William the funds for war. But the War of the Spanish Succession would not be another “King William’s war.”

While hunting near Hampton Court in February 1702, William was thrown from his horse and cracked his collar bone. The wound became infected and William, always frail and sickly, died on 8 February 1702. Thus, the War of the Spanish Succession would be Queen Anne’s war. ■

### Suggested Reading

Bucholz and Key, *Early Modern England*, chap. 10, secs. 4–6.

Coward, *Stuart Age*, chap. 12.

Hoppit, *Land of Liberty?* chap. 4, secs. 3–5; chap. 5, secs. 6–8.

Kishlansky, *Monarchy Transformed*, chap. 12.

### Questions to Consider

1. Were the Tories correct in arguing that the Financial Revolution robbed the landed interest to support the moneyed interest? Did this policy pose long-term problems for England?
2. Why did Louis XIV take the gamble of allowing his grandson to ascend the Spanish throne? What does this say about the military reputation of Britain and the Netherlands?

# King William's War: 1692–1702

## Lecture 41—Transcript

In the last lecture, England embarked on a world war with the most powerful monarchy on earth, Louis XIV's France. As we saw, English participation in the war was reluctant and, apart from the Irish campaign, not particularly successful in the early 1690s. As a result of this, plus evidence that some of his Tory officials had Jacobite sympathies, William began to turn toward the Whigs.

In this lecture, we will see that the Whigs gave William a formidable war ministry, in particular one that was able to tap England's growing commercial wealth. The result would be a successful conclusion to the war with the Treaty of Ryswick of 1697. That put a stop—temporarily—to Louis XIV's territorial ambitions.

Ironically, the country would react to this good news by turning back towards the Tories. Nevertheless, as the reign came to a close at the end of the decade, war would loom again, this time over the Spanish and the English successions.

The Whig leaders appointed by William III proved to be very competent war ministers. They worked so well together that they came to be known as the “Junto” (roughly from the Spanish *junto* or *junta*, meaning “together” or “united”). They comprised the following: First, there was Thomas Wharton, from 1696, Lord Wharton, Comptroller of the Household. He was a brilliant parliamentary orator, especially in the House of Lords. He was also a great landowner, which means that he controlled the votes of numerous tenants and therefore several MPs. He was also a legendary rake, possibly the greatest swordsman duelist of his age, famous for disarming his opponents without killing them. Finally, he was a womanizer and a skeptic who was rumored to have performed an unspeakable act of desecration in an Anglican Church. It was so unspeakable that we don't know exactly what it was—but trust me, it was bad.

Sir John Somers, the second member of the Junto, was, from 1693, Lord Keeper of the Great Seal, and from 1697, Lord Somers and Lord Chancellor

of England. He was a brilliant lawyer. He's the man who drafted the Declaration of Rights and lots of key legislation. He was also something of a rake and a great literary patron. We'll run into some of the people he patronized in a subsequent lecture.

There was Charles Spencer, later Earl of Sunderland. He was the junior member of the Junto and an important speaker in the House of Commons after Wharton and Somers left it to join the Lords. Later, he became an expert on foreign policy. He was connected to the Earl of Marlborough through his marriage to Anne Churchill. In fact, it's this marriage that results in the Spencer Churchills.

Fourthly, there was Admiral Edward Russell. He was one of the "immortal seven" who had issued the famous invitation to William. From 1694, he's First Lord of the Admiralty and, from 1697, Earl of Orford. He was the naval expert of the group. He won a decisive victory against the French at La Hogue in 1692. This was crucial because it eliminated the threat of invasion, which allowed William to take the war to Louis on the continent.

As First Lord, Orford launched a reform of the Royal Navy, building new ships and updating the dockyards. He also established a British naval presence in the Mediterranean. That naval presence would disrupt French trade, and it would persist right down to World War II.

The most important member of the Junto was Charles Montagu. He was First Lord of the Treasury from 1692, Chancellor of the Exchequer from 1694, and then Lord Halifax from 1700. I apologize for the fact that all these people keep changing their names when they do well.

It was Montagu who launched the "Financial Revolution" that would enable England to win the Nine Years' War. As I've been at pains to point out in this course before, money is the key to winning wars. In the words of Daniel Defoe, "It is not the longest sword, but the longest purse that conquers." To beat Louis would require vast armies and navies—and the logistical networks to support them—on an ocean and two continents. All this would cost.



The Nine Years' War was the most expensive war in English history to date. It trebled total government expenditure to about £5.5 million pounds a year, three times the government's annual average peacetime revenue. Louis seemed to be able to raise these kinds of funds easily. Remember, Louis XIV had no Parliament to deal with. Rather, he simply taxed the French peasantry at will.

William did have to deal with a Parliament, which only very reluctantly voted him a land tax of four shillings in the pound in 1693. This source was estimated to yield £2 million a year, at most, since it was assessed and collected by landowners themselves. Remember how English local government works: Your tax collector is probably your neighbor. He's the one who's assessing your property. He's saying, "You know, those fields have never really produced. We just won't count them."

You won't be surprised when I tell you that underassessment was common, and the land tax never really reached the estimated yield. As a result, William's regime was falling behind Louis in the money race.

Montagu had a different idea. His idea was to tap England's growing commercial wealth. After all, there was another source of wealth in England now besides land. It was all the money flowing in from the Commercial Revolution. Remember that England had experienced a trade boom from the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and that was in full flood now.

Parliament did take advantage of this even before Montagu got his chance. They raised customs rates as high as 25 percent. They extended the excise sales tax to more products: leather, coal, malt for brewing, salt, spices, tea, coffee, and wine. Notice that we've moved beyond a sin tax to real necessities.

Those taxes, as well as the land tax, took awhile to collect. They came in in dribs and drabs from their source. William needed quick cash—a huge infusion of quick cash—in order to supply these armies.

Montagu worried that if taxes went any higher on this stuff, the administration would end up killing the goose that was laying the golden

egg of the Commercial Revolution. Instead, Montagu's idea was to try to get merchants who were benefiting from the Commercial Revolution to loan the government large sums quickly and voluntarily. This should have been a hard sell. Remember the stop of the Exchequer? The government's credit was terrible. The fact that William's regime was a revolutionary one teetering on the brink didn't make lenders anymore eager.

What Montagu had to do was offer the English mercantile community deals that they could not refuse. I'd like you to imagine him going to the Royal Exchange and meeting with a group of merchants and saying, "I have some ideas for you to loan money to the government." Of course, they would laugh.

His first idea, in 1693, was to establish a permanent fund out of the land tax, the customs, and the excise, which would be set aside to service loans that had been made to the government. That had never existed before. In other words, Charles Montagu and Parliament together invented the English-funded national debt. You can actually go back and look in the official accounts of the Treasury: The national debt of England begins in the early 1690s. Of course, everything before that had been repudiated.

Second, he then offered the merchants an even better deal as individuals. He said, "Look, here's what we'll do. We want you to loan the government money. We don't promise that we will ever pay back the principal." (Now, there's a good deal.) "But we will give you interest at 14 percent a year." Fourteen percent was an unheard of rate of interest in England at that time. Some of these annuities you could purchase for life. As long as you lived, you were going to get 14 percent. The way the government would get out of it is either if you died, which of course was a very frequent occurrence in a world in which the average life expectancy was no more than 40, or if the war ended and it was able to pay back the principal.

Each side is getting something that it wants. William's regime is getting quick cash; you're getting an annuity that is going to pay itself off in seven years and then it's all gravy. If William won the war and the lender lived, he could make many times his initial investment, a rarity in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

Montagu also established government-sponsored lotteries and in 1694, he sponsored the Bank of England, which acted as a private bank. It made loans and received deposits. It was also an investment opportunity for subscribers. It loaned money to the government. In fact, it would soon become the government's principal lender. It even acted as something of a federal reserve. Since the Bank of England was allowed to print notes, it actually helped to regulate the money supply.

They're just groping towards these very modern sort of financial arrangements, but at the time, this was revolutionary. The result was indeed a Financial Revolution with far-reaching effects. In the short-term, the government raised fabulous sums of money: They raised £4 million in taxes alone. This enabled the Crown to raise and supply its armies in Europe and the Royal Navy at sea.

This, in turn, enabled William to take the war to Louis. Unfortunately, the one problem with the Junto system is they don't have a land general. It would have been Marlborough, but remember, he's in the Tower of London. William took the job himself, but unfortunately, William III was more brave than he was brilliant. The early years of the war continued to see defeats. This led to intensified Tory calls for getting out of Europe and going back to a "blue-water" strategy. The Grand Alliance, which consisted of Britain but also the Dutch, the Holy Roman Empire, Spain, Savoy, Prussia, Bavaria, and Hanover, wavered.

A combination of William's sheer determination and British materiel resources eventually wore Louis down. In 1695, William won a victory. He took the key French fortress of Namur, which opened France to invasion. In the meantime, Louis was running out of money. In 1697, Louis XIV asked for peace.

The result was the Treaty of Ryswick. The Treaty of Ryswick was a draw, but it was a draw that leaned in an English direction. Louis recognized William III, not James II, as the King of England, Scotland, and Ireland. Louis returned nearly all of the European territory he had conquered since 1678. He agreed to work out with William a partition of the Spanish Empire

when Carlos II died. In short, Louis XIV had been stopped, if not defeated, his dreams of a vast Bourbon Empire put on hold, if not wrecked.

The Financial Revolution had achieved its immediate purpose. Its long-term consequences were even more far-reaching. In the long run, this wealth produced by the Financial Revolution (what historian John Brewer has called the “sinews of power”)—in other words, all this money that the English found themselves able to raise—would make the English Crown, as opposed to the English monarch himself, fabulously wealthy and make England the greatest military power on earth.

The British army grew to 76,000 men by 1697, more than double that of James II’s army. The central administration would treble in size from about 4,000 to over 12,000 officers between 1688 and 1725. Old departments grew, like the Excise and the Navy Office. New departments, like the Office of Trade and Plantations, were established.

This administration, faced with fighting a global war, grew more efficient and professional. The Treasury continued to try to weed out old corrupt practices like fee taking and sale of office, and tried to give people adequate salaries. It even drew up training manuals. The earliest government statisticians, men like Gregory King and William Petty, start to work. All of this implies a more professional bureaucracy, and it was all made possible by the Financial Revolution.

In order to secure parliamentary approval for the Financial Revolution, William had to make constitutional concessions. Parliament authorized all this, but William had to give Parliament something for it. In 1691, he agreed to the establishment of a parliamentary Commission of Accounts to examine his expenditure. In 1694, he agreed to a new, stricter Triennial Act. In 1701, he agreed to a series of limitations on royal power. Finally, since the national debt was self-perpetuating and new ways of raising money had to be run through Parliament all the time, Parliament became a more permanent part of the institution of government.

My argument here is that the Financial Revolution helped to complete the work of the Glorious Revolution in making England a constitutional parliamentary monarchy.

The social economic importance of the Financial Revolution was even greater. It made its investors (as well as government contractors whose goods were purchased with the money raised) very wealthy, very fast. In effect, the Financial Revolution created a new class of men: “moneyed men.” Moneyed men were not landowners. They were people who made money out of credit—out of money. These people were overwhelmingly Whig, and they were often Dissenters.

The Tories saw them as parasites. They made money from war. They made money from the land tax, which remember was going to fund the national debt. They made money out of money, not from land itself. People didn’t understand that yet. Worse, these men own no land, and yet they were taken into the government’s councils. They helped the government figure out what it was going to do.

Do you remember when the Anglican Tories were so upset that James was going to give power to Catholics and some Dissenters? Now they’re upset that William seems to be giving power to these moneyed men and Dissenters.

Their frustration, snobbery, and bewilderment at the new financial apparatus was perfectly captured by Jonathan Swift a few years later in a piece he wrote for *The Examiner*:

Let any man observe the equipages in this town. He shall find the greater number of those who make a figure to be a species of men quite different from any that were ever known before the revolution, consisting either of generals or colonels, or of such whose whole fortunes lie in funds and stocks, so that power, which according to the old maxim was used to follow land, is now gone over to money. The country gentleman is in the condition of a young heir out of whose estate a scrivener (lawyer) receives half of the rents for interest and has a mortgage on the whole.

It didn't help that the average member of the landed classes couldn't figure out any of these new financial expedients. They all seemed complicated and a little bit shady.

Through the contrivance and cunning of stock 'jobbers' (brokers) there has been brought in such a complication of knavery and cousinage, such a mystery of iniquity, and such an unintelligible jargon of terms to involve it in as were never known in any other age or country of the world.

Anyone who's ever had trouble figuring out how IRAs work or how junk bonds make people rich will understand this frustration. Of course, the sort of necessary implication is, "It must all be crooked at heart, right? The whole thing is like a pyramid scheme. It will collapse eventually."

The whole business—the war the Tories didn't want; the vast government bureaucracy necessary to fight it; the huge national debt contracted to pay for it; the high land taxes to secure that debt; the novel, even impenetrable, financial expedience necessary to fund the debt; and the growing wealth of heretofore unknown upstarts, non-landed merchants, government contractors, stock "jobbers," and army officers—all these things worried contemporaries. They seemed to threaten the position of the landed aristocracy. The old hallmarks of rank, birth, and land were counting for less and less. In the new post-revolutionary world, anyone could rise.

The Financial Revolution was yet one more of those things that's chipping away at the old Great Chain of Being.

The Treaty of Ryswick and the stop it put to the ambitions of Louis XIV was a great achievement, but many Britons felt that after the expenditure of so much blood and treasure, there should have been more. That feeling, combined with complaints about high taxes, fears about a burgeoning national debt, and a certain amount of bickering among the Whig leaders, helps to explain why following the war there was a reaction in the country in favor of the Tories.

The Tories had been evolving all through the '90s into a country party, or an opposition party. They'd been acquiring many of the old "country" Whigs along the way. Their leader was a former country Whig himself. His name was Robert Harley, and we'll hear about him quite a bit in the next few lectures.

Harley was the son of Dissenters—old Parliamentarians and Exclusionists. He should be a perfect Whig according to the old scheme. In the mid-90s, Harley, in fact, emerged as the spokesman for the country wing of the Whig party. But as the Whigs evolve into a court party and begin to cooperate with the government, Harley finds himself at sea. He finds himself isolated, as do many Tories who've been thrown out of government.

Just as the Tories begin to be frozen out of government, they embrace country ideals. Eventually the two groups, "country" Whigs and Tories, would merge under Harley's leadership. The result would be a new Tory party. The Tories were now suspicious of big government and modern finance. They hated foreign entanglements. They hated standing armies, and they hated expensive wars.

Following the 1698 election, the Tories gradually move back into power and dismantle or repudiate the policies of the Junto. They cut the land tax in half. They vote to demobilize William's army and send home his Dutch Guards. They vote to confiscate lands William had given as rewards to Dutch and English favorites. They vote to impeach the Whig ministers for their conduct of the war.

At this point, you're listening to this and saying, "How does William put up with this?" He hates every one of these measures, but remember, William's a constitutional king. He needs Parliament to keep funding that debt. If they ever pull the plug and all those people demand their money, he's going to have to declare bankruptcy and then he'll really be open to Louis XIV's next adventure. He's got to do what Parliament wants him to do.

The most notable achievement of the Tory ministry was the passage of the Act of Settlement in 1701. In 1700, Princess Anne's last surviving child, the Duke of Gloucester, died. Since William and Mary had never had children,

the only remaining Stuart claimant to the throne after Anne was the Catholic Prince James.

Harley and most Country Tories were not Jacobites. They set about to have Parliament determine a new succession after the childless William and Anne. In so doing, they skipped over scores of Catholic Stuarts to pick the nearest Protestant heirs. They ended up with Sophia, Electress of Hanover, who was a great, great,—several “greats” down the line—granddaughter of James I through his daughter Elizabeth, and her son George Ludwig. Thus, Parliament once again opted for Protestantism and practicality over divine right and the hereditary succession.

By the way, since this is a Country-Tory Parliament, it also took the opportunity to clip subsequent monarchs’ wings, hence the Acts of Official Title. This was an act for the further limitation of the Crown and better securing the rights and liberties of the subjects. This act decreed that after Anne, no king of England could leave the country without permission, as William had done to fight and visit his lands in the Netherlands. No future English king could fight a war on behalf of some other territory that he ruled, like William’s Dutch Republic. No future English king could employ or grant land to a foreigner, even a naturalized foreigner, as William had done to his Dutch favorites. No future King of England could give offices to members of Parliament, as the Junto had done to ensure loyalty.

The Act of Settlement was yet another stage on the road to constitutional monarchy.

If you’re paying attention, you’re saying, “But a Tory Parliament passed that, and all these provisions are against the king.” The Tories were now an opposition party. Even though they were temporarily in power, they’d been out of power for a long time, and they wanted revenge for William’s and the Junto’s policies.

The Tory triumph of peace and reform was short-lived. In the period from 1700–1702, the international situation heated up again because of three royal deaths. First, in October 1700, the King of Spain, poor old Carlos II, finally died—heirless, of course. On his deathbed, he made a will. Nobody had



expected Carlos to make a will. You'll remember that William and Louis had gotten together and written a Partition Treaty. They knew what they were going to do with the Spanish Empire.

But no one had asked Carlos. Instead, Carlos, as his last act, left the Spanish Crown and its empire to one person: Louis XIV's grandson, Phillipe, Duke of Anjou, on the condition that he could never be King of France as well. Should Anjou refuse, the whole thing was to be offered lock, stock, and barrel—with no partition—to the second son of the Holy Roman Emperor, the Archduke Charles of Austria. Carlos knew one thing: He was the King of Spain and its empire, and he would die with it intact and leave it intact to his successor.

Now, you're Louis XIV. Imagine your dilemma. Carlos's will has just given you everything you've always wanted—everything you've worked for for 30 years on a silver platter. The stipulation about the two crowns not being united could be worked out in the courts.

On the other hand, if you accept the will, you might very well provoke war with William. Remember that Louis had failed to beat the British and the Dutch in 1697. Imagine, therefore, the scene at Versailles on 16 November 1700. Louis, Phillipe, and Louis's marshals are closeted. They're gathered behind closed doors in the royal council chamber. An expectant crowd of courtiers mills about in the antechamber. Suddenly, the doors are flung open. The Sun King emerges. His grandson at his right side, not behind him as proper etiquette would dictate if he were merely a prince. That's the first clue.

Louis speaks: "Gentleman, you see here the King of Spain. Such was the will of heaven. I have fulfilled it with joy." At the proclamation of his most Catholic majesty, "Felipe V," King of Spain and its empire, the Spanish ambassador to Versailles is said to have fallen to his knees, remarking, "The Pyrenees (the mountainous border between Spain and France) have been leveled."

Louis had taken the wager. At first, it seemed to pay off. When William heard, he called for war, but the Tory Parliament didn't want a war. What

did this have to do with England? They didn't want another war with France. What's so wrong about a landowner bequeathing his entire state to whomever he wishes? There was nothing to worry about as long as the two Crowns remained separate.

But would they remain separate? Early in 1701, the French courts ruled that a Spanish will could not affect the French succession. More provocatively, Louis marched into a number of key fortress towns in the Spanish Netherlands on the Dutch border. Most provoking and stupid of all, Louis announced an embargo against English trade to both France and Spain. In other words, Louis was already acting as if he were the King of Spain.

Even the Tories knew the significance of trade. They authorized William in June 1701 to make any undertakings he needed to form a Grand Alliance to defend the liberties of Europe. War was brewing.

It became inevitable following the second royal death. In November 1701, the deposed King of England, Scotland, and Ireland, poor old James II, finally died. James had been living in pious seclusion with a small court of devotees at the chateau that Louis XIV had provided for him at St. Germain near Paris. On his deathbed, he begged one last favor of Louis XIV: "Recognize my son, Prince James, as the King of England, Scotland, and Ireland when I die."

Once again, you're Louis and you're faced with a terrible dilemma. Here is the deathbed request of an old friend, a fellow monarch, and a Catholic who had lost everything for the faith, but if you accept there will surely be war with William, whose right to the British thrones you would have to repudiate if you recognize Prince James.

Once again, Louis listened to his heart, rather than to his head. This time he made the announcement in James's sick room at St. Germain: "I come to tell your majesty that I will be to your son what I have been to you and will acknowledge him as King of England, Scotland, and Ireland." Once again, the assembled courtiers fall to their knees, but no one made any sanguine predictions about draining the English Channel.

This meant war. William's diplomatic corps begins to fan out and immediately begins to reassemble the Grand Alliance for what would be called the War of the Spanish Succession. Parliament now voted the king the funds for the war, but the War of the Spanish Succession would not be another "King William's war."

After months of feverish activity, the king sought rest and recreation at Hampton Court Palace in February 1702. One day, while he was out hunting in Richmond Park, his horse, Sorrel, stumbled on a molehill. William was thrown and cracked his collarbone. For years afterwards, Jacobites would offer toasts to the "little gentleman in black velvet." The little gentleman in black velvet was the mole that built the molehill that tripped Sorrel, which threw William III.

The wound became infected. William had always been frail and sickly, and he died on 8 February 1702. The War of the Spanish Succession would be Queen Anne's war.

In this lecture, we learned how William's embrace of the Whigs and their brilliant war ministry led to a victory in the Nine Years' War. The margin of victory was not superior generalship or braver than average troops, but Britain's wealth, born of the Commercial Revolution and channeled to the war by the Financial Revolution. The system of government finance invented by Charles Montagu, Lord Halifax, not only enabled William to fight the war and wear down Louis. It also laid the foundation for the most efficient administration and the most powerful military in Europe.

It also forced the king to concede constitutional ground to Parliament, and it created a new class of moneyed men who'd challenge the old idea that status should be based on birth and landed wealth.

Perhaps because they weren't ready for the challenge, the country embraced a pacific Country-Tory administration after the war. Their great achievement was the Act of Settlement, which established a Protestant succession after Anne. But the Tory administration would have to give way at reign's end, as the British kingdoms went to war one more time against Louis XIV to safeguard not only the Spanish succession, but the English succession and

the entire Revolution Settlement. The War of the Spanish Succession would determine whether the Revolution's answers to England's problems would last. In that sense, this whole course comes down to this one war.

In the next lecture, we meet the woman who was raised by the laws of hereditary succession to fight that war: Queen Anne.

# Queen Anne and the Rage of Party: 1702

## Lecture 42

**On the one hand, according to the authors, Anne was clearly unfit by her constitution, her intelligence (or lack thereof), her temperament, her education, her experience, and apparently even her appearance to rule. Yet, this ordinary woman helped shape the fate of her people, and I might add of Europe in general, by two actions that “brought England unparalleled military victories” and “peace to her kingdom.” If you’ve been paying attention to this course, you should know that no other Tudor or Stuart could make that claim.**

Queen Anne has not had a good press. Historians have often underestimated Anne because she was quiet and plain. In fact, her strong common sense and identification with the hopes and fears of her people would make her the most successful of the Stuarts. Anne, the youngest daughter of James II was 37 years old at her accession. Eighteen pregnancies had left her prematurely aged, overweight, and lame from gout but still childless after the death of Gloucester in 1700. She was quiet, shy, and of average intelligence. Lacking the star quality of Queen Elizabeth, historians used to portray her as a nonentity.

But Anne had many positive qualities missing from her Stuart—and even Tudor—forebears. She had common sense. She was dedicated to the job of being queen. She respected the post-revolutionary constitution, making no claim to divine right. She was pious and moral. In particular, she was passionately loyal to the Church of England. She had an instinctive love for, and understanding of, her people.

Historians have come to realize that Anne, although no political genius, was nevertheless the most successful Stuart. Her reign would see the culmination of the Commercial and Financial Revolutions and widespread prosperity, an Act of Union with Scotland, victory in war and a peace that would leave England the most powerful state in Europe, and a great flowering of English culture. For years, historians attributed these achievements to Anne’s principal ministers and the advice of friends and favorites. In her early years,

Anne was dominated by Sarah Churchill, later Duchess of Marlborough. But by the time she became queen, Anne was very much her own woman, as Sarah found out.

Anne was served by able ministers, for which she deserves some credit. John Churchill, Duke of Marlborough, Anne's captain-general, was the greatest military commander of the age. Sidney, Lord (from 1706, Earl) Godolphin, her lord treasurer, was a financial genius equal to Montagu. Robert Harley, from 1704, a secretary of state, was the period's greatest pure politician and a born leader of the House of Commons. Anne needed these men to act as managers—on the battlefield and in Parliament—with a view to keeping her from having to give herself over entirely to the Whigs or the Tories. She wanted to preserve her freedom of action by employing the most moderate men of both parties, whose loyalty was, ultimately, to her. But the Whigs and Tories were bent on forcing the queen to employ *only* members of their respective parties in government.

In Parliament, each party sought a majority. This would force the queen to employ ministers and officials from that party. If she failed to do so, the majority party might refuse to vote the funding necessary to run the government—unthinkable with a war on. The key to securing majorities in the House of Commons (which might lead to office and creations in the House of Lords) was to win elections. Thanks to the Triennial Act of 1694, there were 12 general elections between 1689 and 1715. This increased party tensions, focused party organization, and brought more people into the political process. Some 330,000 males—5.8 percent of the population—had the vote by 1722, by far the largest electorate in Europe. Many of these people could be bribed or intimidated by their landlords or employers, because there was no secret ballot. But the electorate was too



**Queen Anne of Great Britain receives the Duke of Marlborough.**

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large to be controlled completely. Therefore, both parties had to spend heavy sums on propaganda.

Both political parties were very sophisticated organizations by 1702. Nearly every member of the ruling elite aligned with one party or the other, and party solidarity in Parliament was almost total. The Whig/Tory split permeated almost every aspect of elite culture. There were Whig and Tory writers, newspapers, and periodicals; Whig and Tory clubs and coffee houses; and even different ways in which female party sympathizers wore their makeup! In the country at large, Whig and Tory peers competed to be lords lieutenants, which gave them control of the militia. Whig and Tory gentlemen competed to be JPs, which gave them control of justice, the price of grain, and other concerns. In towns, Whig and Tory professionals and merchants competed for places on the corporation, the court of aldermen, and so on. This gave them control of local government and poor relief.

The great issues that divided Whig from Tory during the reign of Queen Anne were the succession (which had deep implications for sovereignty), religion, and the war (which, of course, embraced both foreign policy and finance). The Act of Settlement had decreed in 1701 that Anne would be succeeded at her death by the Hanoverian family of Germany. Whigs were happy with Parliament making this choice and with a Lutheran monarch. Tories, on the other hand, were divided between Hanoverians and Jacobites, who secretly hoped and worked for the succession of “James III”—sometimes in cahoots with Louis XIV. Anne was officially a Hanoverian, but like Elizabeth before her, she disliked the subject of her own demise. This silence led many Jacobites to assume that she was secretly one of them. In the end, the succession would be determined by the outcome of the war: If the British and Dutch won, the “winner” would probably be the Hanoverians. If the French won, the monarch would be James, whom Whigs dubbed the “Pretender.” The religious question, too, would be partly determined by the war.

There remained a small minority of Catholics who wanted to be left in peace. But a British defeat in the War of the Spanish Succession would mean the succession of a Catholic king and, probably, some sort of Catholic restoration. Given that the war went well, the religious debate centered mostly on the fate

of the Dissenters. Queen Anne, the Tories, and the Anglican majority wanted Dissenters to remain second-class citizens. Some wanted to roll back the toleration or pass a bill against occasional conformity. This would hurt the Whigs, because so many of them were Dissenters. Whigs wanted to extend the toleration by repealing the Test Act. The war would be determined by what strategy the allies pursued and how much money England, in particular, could throw at it.

Whigs were all out for the war. They saw Louis XIV's France as the chief danger to the peace of Europe, the Protestant faith tradition, and the English way of life. They feared that a Bourbon on the throne of Spain would lead to the subjugation of Europe. They feared that a Catholic Stuart on the throne of England would undo the Reformation and the Revolution Settlement. Whig financiers and merchants also benefited from fat war contracts. Thus, Whig ministers and politicians favored taking the conflict to Louis by fighting an aggressive—and expensive—land war on the Continent and supported the high taxation and financial expedients necessary to fight the war.

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**The war would be determined by what strategy the allies pursued and how much money England, in particular, could throw at it.**

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Tory politicians and landowners supported the war reluctantly. They had less fear of Louis XIV and believed that Dissenters, not Catholics, were the chief danger to the Protestant tradition. Their Jacobite wing wanted “James III” restored to the British thrones. Tory landowners were sick of the land tax and suspicious of a costly military that seemed to achieve so little. Tory ministers and politicians preferred, therefore, a “blue-water” naval strategy, which involved attacking French colonial possessions, to an expensive land war.

Because Anne's first Parliament and government were dominated by Tories, the war would start slowly for England. Eventually, the queen would face the same choice as her predecessor: Temperamentally a Tory, she would have to turn to the Whigs to fight her war. ■



## Suggested Reading

Bucholz and Key, *Early Modern England*, chap. 10, sec. 7.

Gregg, *Queen Anne*, chap. 5.

Holmes, *British Politics*.

Hoppit, *Land of Liberty?* chap. 9, secs. 1–2.

Kishlansky, *Monarchy Transformed*, chap. 13.

## Questions to Consider

1. Queen Anne was, like Elizabeth and Mary II before her and Victoria and Elizabeth II after her, very popular with her subjects. Do female rulers tend to be more popular than males? If so, why?
2. Despite her successful reign, Anne has received a much worse press from historians than Elizabeth, whose success might be said to be more limited. Why? What does this tell us about Anne? Elizabeth? The historians? Ourselves?

# Queen Anne and the Rage of Party: 1702

## Lecture 42—Transcript

In the last lecture, we saw how the British kingdoms were able to channel English mercantile wealth into stopping Louis XIV in the Nine Years' War. We also saw how that strategy widened the political divisions that already existed in England between the Whig and the Tory parties. Finally, we learned that the issues that led to the Nine Years' War were not settled by it. They would have to be determined by yet another war in which were at stake the Spanish and English successions, and therefore the freedom of Europe and the Revolution Settlement in England.

In this lecture, we meet the woman who was to lead England in that war. As we'll see, Queen Anne was quiet and plain, and this has led historians to underestimate her. In fact, her strong common sense and identification with the hopes and fears of her people would make her the most successful of the Stuarts. She would win the War of the Spanish Succession, not least because she chose able ministers to fight it for her and run her government. Their job was to fight the war, but also to maintain her freedom of maneuver in the face of the two political parties, both of whom sought to capture majorities in Parliament and force the queen to employ them in government. To do that, they had to sway a sizeable electorate on the three major issues of the reign: the succession, religion, and the war.

Queen Anne ascended to rapturous cheering, bells, and bonfires, but she's not received a good press since. Take this account from a current, popular, and (it must be said) a generally judicious survey of English history, written primarily for the American market by two historians whom I admire:

Princess Anne, daughter of James II, ascended the throne in 1702. She was 37 years old, exceedingly fat, red and spotted in complexion, and wracked by doubt. She had to be carried to her coronation. She was slow-witted, uninformed, obstinate, and narrow-minded, yet also pious, sensible, good-natured, and kind.

She bore 15 children and buried them all. She loved the Church and those who defended it, but had no interest in art, music, plays, or books. Her one hobby was eating; her husband's was drinking.

This ordinary woman whom the laws of hereditary monarchy raised to the throne, helped shape events during these years in two ways: first, by naming the Earl of Marlborough in 1702 to command her troops, and secondly by dismissing him from that command in 1711. By the first act, she brought England unparalleled military victories; by the second, she brought peace to her kingdom.

Faint praise, indeed. Yet even the most careless reader or listener can't possibly miss the logical problem at the heart of the passage: on the one hand, according to the authors, Anne was clearly unfit by her constitution, her intelligence (or lack thereof), her temperament, her education, her experience, and apparently even her appearance, to rule. Yet, this ordinary woman helped shape the fate of her people, and I might add of Europe in general, by two actions that "brought England unparalleled military victories" and "peace to her kingdom."

If you've been paying attention to this course, you should know that no other Tudor or Stuart could make that claim. Can we sort this out?

The youngest daughter of James II was 37 years old at her accession. So far, I agree. But a series of 18 pregnancies, plus poor eating habits and bad 17<sup>th</sup>-century medical care, had left her prematurely aged, overweight, and lame from gout, and finally childless after the death of her beloved Gloucester in 1700.

Anne was quiet, shy, thrifty, pious, happy in her marriage to Prince George, and of average intelligence. In short, she lacked the star quality of Queen Elizabeth or even her sister Mary II. As a result, historians used to portray her as a nonentity. For example, Justin McCarthy, wrote in 1911: "When we speak of the age of Queen Anne, we cannot possibly associate the greatness of the era with any genius or inspiration coming from the woman whose name it bears."

In fact, I should perhaps take this opportunity to point out that nearly everything in our society that bears the designation Queen Anne, from lace to houses to chairs, has nothing to do with her and usually nothing to do with the period. If you see a Queen Anne house, you're seeing something that would have struck Queen Anne as fantastical (at least its meaning in this country).

Beatrice Curtis Brown in her lugubriously entitled *Alas, Queen Anne* of 1929 wrote, "Anne as a historical pivot does not exist."

I submit that this is a piece of simple sexism, whatever the gender of the historian. That is, if you stop to think about it, England's previous queen, Elizabeth, has always received a good press, but it's in part because, apart from her looks, her virtues tend to be those traditionally associated with males: courage, stubbornness, and presence. When male historians have wanted to bash her, what do they pick on? Her indecisiveness.

Anne's virtues on the other hand—her calmness, thrift, piety, and fidelity—are those of the good housewife. Is it any wonder that a profession dominated by men has—until very recently—found her wanting? Her one vice was overeating, but could she have picked a worse one from the point of view of modern prejudices? In fact, in the course of my work on Anne, I found that generally if a historian describes her as "comely" or "plump," then he usually thinks her a pretty good queen. If he or she describes her as "grossly obese," she's always a nonentity.

In fact, Anne had many positive qualities missing from her Stuart and even her Tudor forebearers. She had a strong fund of commonsense. She was dedicated to the job of being queen. She respected the post-revolutionary constitution, and she made no claim to divine right. She understood that she was a constitutional monarch. She was pious and moral, and, in particular, passionately loyal to the Church of England.

Above all, she had an instinctive love for, understanding of, and sense of responsibility towards her people. How many Stuarts can we say that of? In fact, unable to have healthy children, but happily married to Prince George, obviously Anne could not be the Virgin Queen wedded to her people as

Elizabeth was. Instead, she cultivated the image of the nursing mother of her people. This area of life where she'd obviously been a failure, she was able to turn into a positive by becoming their mother. Obviously, in this case, the queen's matronly appearance actually played to her advantage.

Recent historians have come to realize that Anne, while no political genius, was nevertheless the most successful Stuart. In fact, I'd like to argue that with the possible exception of Henry VII, she was the most successful of any of the monarchs portrayed in these lectures.

Her reign would see the culmination of the Commercial and Financial Revolutions and widespread prosperity; an Act of Union with Scotland; a victorious war against France (when was the last time we were able to say that?); a peace that would leave England the leading military power in Europe; a great flowering of English culture; and finally, she was the most popular sovereign covered in this course with the possible exception of Elizabeth (it's hard to tell, because Elizabeth is always the one telling us how popular she was).

Remember the ending of that film *Elizabeth* that I referred to in a previous lecture? The one that asserts that at the death of the queen, England was the most powerful and wealthiest nation in Europe? It's true if the queen you mean was Queen Anne.

There's one group of historians who just find Anne a dead loss, and then there are the ones who say, "Yes, yes, yes, she had a wonderful reign, but really it was because of her principal ministers and the advice of friends and favorites." They were thought to dominate her.

It's true that in her early years, Anne was dominated by her friendship with Sarah Churchill, the scintillating and eventual Duchess of Marlborough. The Churchills and Sidney, Lord Godolphin, formed a little circle of opposition at the court of William III, waiting to come into power. As princess, Anne had quarreled repeatedly with William and Mary, in particular when she stood by the Marlboroughs when the Duke was accused of being a Jacobite.

At this point, I should probably slip in that Anne and William hated each other. Anne called him “Mr. Caliban.” My favorite story of their hatred involves food. Anne loved peas. Especially when she was pregnant, she craved them. Whenever there was a state dinner or William had Anne and George over, he would always make sure to eat all the peas first and that left a profound impression on the future queen.

As queen, Anne placed Sarah in three of the most lucrative and powerful jobs at court. She was Groom of the Stool, in charge of access to the queen’s bedchamber. She was Mistress of the Robes, in charge of her clothing, and Keeper of the Privy Purse, in charge of Anne’s private funds.

Given the queen’s shyness and supposed lack of intelligence, and given Sarah’s vibrant nature, contemporaries naturally assumed that it was Sarah who ran the show. Sarah herself later encouraged that impression. Anne will die in 1714; Sarah will live into the 1740s, and she wrote lots of letters, made public statements, and published her memoirs, *The Conduct of the Dowager Duchess of Marlborough*. According to Sarah, “Anne would not take the air unless somebody advised her to it, loved fawning and adoration and hated plain dealing, and had a soul that nothing could so effectually move as flattery or fear.”

There’s some truth to this when Anne was a princess. Anne has a definite learning curve, but by the time she became queen, Anne was very much her own woman, as Sarah found out. Sarah constantly tried to influence royal policy and, as she confesses in her memoirs, she never succeeded. You see, Queen Anne, being a conventional woman, only trusted men. But what men?

Anne may be credited with choosing three of the most able ministers ever to serve an English prince. First, there was John Churchill, Duke of Marlborough, Anne’s captain-general, who proved to be the greatest military commander of the age. There was Sidney, Lord (from 1706, Earl) Godolphin, her lord treasurer, who proved to be a financial genius the equal of Montagu. There was Robert Harley, from 1704, a secretary of state, who proved to be the period’s greatest pure politician, and so a born leader in the House of Commons.

In short, Anne may not have been a skillful administrator herself (though in fact she ran a very tight household), but she knew how to delegate. Anne needed these men to act as managers on the battlefield and in Parliament, with a view to keeping her from having to give herself over entirely to the Whigs and Tories. Anne's idea, which is in fact not that different from William's originally, was to employ mixed ministries—that is, ministries made up of the best men of both parties whose loyalty would be owed, ultimately, to her. In other words, she didn't want to go with a completely Whig or a completely Tory ministry.

The Whig and Tory leaders had a different idea. They took a harder line. They were bent on forcing the queen to employ members of *only* their respective parties. This is what contemporaries called “storming the closet.” In other words, you'd force the queen to employ your people (“storming the closet” because the word “closet” in those days did not just mean a place where you put your clothes—it was also the queen's office).

Thus, in Parliament, each party sought to secure a majority. That's what would force the queen to pick ministers and government officials from that party, especially for the big-ticket offices like lord treasurer, lord chancellor, lord president of the council, and the two secretaries of state. In power, their idea was that they would steer the queen and the government towards the policies favored by their party. You can see how that popular image of Anne as weak would really tempt them to think that they could do so.

If the queen refused to appoint such men, then the majority party might refuse to vote funding necessary to run the government. Remember, England is fighting a war during Anne's reign, so this is very serious stuff. In fact, you might be shocked to learn that party politicians would hold the war hostage to their own political ambitions, but they would. Nationalism was not yet what it would eventually become in England.

The key to securing majorities in the House of Commons (which would lead to office and also majorities in the House of Lords, because these officials could then influence the queen to create more peers) was to win elections. Thanks to the Revolution and the Triennial Act of 1694, there were lots of opportunities to win elections, because elections took place 12 times between

1689 and 1715. Remember, the Triennial Act requires an election every three years at least. This constitutes more elections than any comparable period in British history.

The period also saw more contested elections—where two or more people ran—than ever before. Remember, the old system was parliamentary “selection” where each county would produce a consensus candidate. Now, you get real contests.

All of this electoral activity, new to England, served to increase party tensions, focus party organization, and bring more and more people into the political process. I’d like to examine that idea. First, thanks to inflation, more ordinary farmers are qualified to give a vote under the 40-shilling franchise. Their lands have grown in value.

In the towns, each party tried to increase its members’ voting rolls by manipulating the charter. That is to say, every time a particular party was up in the House of Commons, it would go through all the borough charters and add its people onto the borough charter. Of course, then, in the next election, the other party would win and they’d add its people, so the electorate is growing. By 1722, some 330,000 males—that’s 5.8 percent of the population—had a vote. That’s maybe a fifth, or maybe a quarter, of the adult male population. This is by far the largest electorate in Europe. England is unique.

This doesn’t mean that it was a free electorate. There were all sorts of ways in which the party bosses, the landed aristocracy, etc., could manipulate the voters. Where one family dominated a particular locality, there wouldn’t be a choice of candidates. You were free to vote for that particular family’s nominee. Where a choice was offered, let me remind you that there was no secret ballot. If you were a tenant or an employee, you could be pressured by your landlord on pain of unemployment or homelessness. Voters could also be bribed by free beer, meals, and even money.

In fact, they expected it. In 1698, Alexander Popham treated the 32 voters of Bath to a meal comprising two venison pasties, two boiled haunches, two chines of mutton, four geese, four pigs, 12 turkey chickens, and innumerable



regular chickens and rabbits, all washed down by claret and sherry. Then, when the dinner was over, the diners proceeded to break the windows, “On purpose that the glaziers that were not worthy to eat with them might have some benefit by the matter.”

Outright venality—demanding money for votes—was rare, but it happened. These areas were called “rotten boroughs.” At Wooten Bassett toward the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Colonel Webb’s electoral agent, “carried a bag of money through the town upon his shoulders with a pair of bagpipes playing before him.”

How much money? At Webley in 1701, votes went for £20 a piece, which was considered high. Later in the century, towns would demand that a candidate repave their roads or pay off the town debt. At this point—we talked about manipulation—who’s really manipulating whom? The voters are getting quite a bit for their vote. As this implies, the electorate was in some localities too large and too various to be controlled completely. Remember that many voters were property owners, and so they were free agents. In many places, the tradition developed of “plumping,” or splitting. Remember that most constituencies elect two MPs—counties for example. What many voters did was reserve one vote to the landlord and keep one for themselves.

Some constituencies, like big towns like London and the counties themselves, were just too big to bribe. In this case, the candidates actually had to mount a campaign. There was actually some debate. Therefore, both parties spent heavy sums on propaganda. After the Licensing Act lapsed in 1695, the press grew more free. Each party commissioned its own pamphlets, poems, broadsides, and handbills, and ran its own heavily slanted newspapers.

Robert Harley, in particular, was a master of this. He kept a whole stable of writers at work. He gave a lot of the important initial patronage to Daniel Defoe and Jonathan Swift. Do you remember the quote from the last lecture from Jonathan Swift about the moneyed men? That came from the Harley paper, *The Examiner*. As this implies, both political parties were pretty sophisticated organizations by 1702. We’re really describing a phenomenon here that I think is unprecedented in Western history, yet obviously holds a lot of import for our political system. Thanks to the careful work on

parliamentary voting by the historian Geoffrey Holmes, we now know that virtually every member of Parliament can be demonstrated to have voted consistently with one party or the other. It's a real party system.

In fact, most members of the elite can be slotted as either a Whig or a Tory. What I'm saying is every one who mattered was either a Whig or a Tory—no exceptions. The Whig/Tory split permeated almost every aspect of elite culture. There were Whig writers in newspapers: Joseph Addison, Sir Richard Steele, *The Observer*, and *The Flying Post*. There were also Tory writers in newspapers: Jonathan Swift, Henry St. John, *The Post Boy*, and *The Examiner*. There were Whig clubs and coffee houses: the Kit Kat and White's. There were also Tory clubs and coffee houses: the Society of Brothers and Ozinda's.

There were Whig toasts, "To the immortal memory of King William." There were also Tory, even Jacobite, toasts, "To the little gentleman in black velvet" (the mole that tripped William's horse), or, my personal favorite, "To the king across the water," in which two drinkers in a pub would place a bowl of water on the table and toast the "king across the water." No one could therefore accuse them of treason.

There were even different ways in which female party sympathizers wore their makeup. Depending upon whether you were a Whig or a Tory, you would wear "patches"—these were artificial birthmarks—on either the left or the right side of your face. I've never been able to keep straight which side was which.

Whig and Tory peers competed to be lords lieutenants, which meant that they controlled the militia. Whig and Tory gentlemen competed to be JPs, which gave them control of justice, and the regulation of markets, and the price of grain. In towns, Whig and Tory professionals and merchants competed for places on the corporation and the court of aldermen. That meant that they would run local government and poor relief. In short, the point that I'm trying to make is that the "rage of party" (a contemporary phrase) colored and divided almost every aspect of political life, professional life, and even pleasurable life in Queen Anne's England. Remember, Anne's strategy is to remain above it all.

What were they fighting about? What were the big issues that divided Whig from Tory during the reign of Queen Anne? I'm going to take the five great areas of tension that we've talked about all through the Stuart period and boil them down into three great issues under Anne. They were the succession, which obviously had deep implications for sovereignty, because if the Hanoverian succession doesn't go, it must mean that Parliament is no longer sovereign; religion, of course; and the war, which embraced both foreign policy and money. First, the succession: The Act of Settlement had decreed in 1701 that Anne would be succeeded at her death by the Hanoverian family of Germany. That is, Parliament had once again demonstrated its sovereignty by choosing England's next monarch. Whigs were perfectly happy with this—both the idea of Parliament making the choice and with a Lutheran monarch who's not that far off from the Dissenters, with whom they're sympathetic.

In fact, as the reign wore on, some Whigs appeared to be a little too eager to begin the next one. The reason was that Anne herself tended to be a Tory temperamentally. She was, remember, pious and devoutly Anglican. The Whigs also wanted the Hanoverians because the Whigs knew that the Hanoverians knew that the Whigs supported them, so they figured that the Hanoverians would give them jobs when they came to the throne.

Tories felt comfortable with Anne. She was a real Stuart. She supported the Anglican ascendancy. They wouldn't like her position on the war; she supported it staunchly. But when it came to the next reign, Tories were divided. There were Hanoverian Tories who voted for the Act of Settlement, but there were also Jacobites who secretly hoped and worked for the succession of "King James III", sometimes in cahoots with Louis XIV. I should explain that if the young prince ever did become king in the British Isles, he would have been James III of England and Ireland, and James VIII of Scotland. Anne was officially a Hanoverian. This is her position on the succession, but like Elizabeth, she didn't like to talk or think about it. This is an unpleasant subject for her: What's going to happen after she's dead. This silence led many Jacobites to assume that she was secretly one of them, and that at her death, on her deathbed, she would acknowledge her brother.

Historians used to believe this, but as they've studied Anne's letters and those written around her, they've come to realize that, in fact, Anne didn't much like the German family, but she was no Jacobite. She believed the warming pan myth. She had to. If she really thought that her brother was the real son of the king, then she's out of a job. In fact, she would ask royal physicians, "Do you think it's possible? Could you cram a baby into a warming pan? Would that have worked?" Of course, they always said, "Yes, your majesty." In fact, it wouldn't.

In the end, the succession would be determined by the outcome of the war. If the British and Dutch won, the Hanoverians would succeed. If the French won, clearly the "Pretender," Prince James, would come back. The religious question too would be partly determined by the war. There remained in England, of course, a small minority of Catholics who by now just want to be left alone. Remember that a British defeat in the War of the Spanish Succession would almost certainly mean the succession of a Catholic king and probably some sort of Catholic restoration. As we'll see, the war went well, so the religious issue is still important, but the sort of Catholic issue goes away.

The religious debate in Queen Anne's England was mainly around the toleration of Dissenters. The Whigs were for it; the Tories were against it. Whigs wanted to extend the toleration by repealing the Test Act. Queen Anne, the Tories, and the Anglican majority wanted Dissenters to remain second-class citizens. They wanted the Test Act to remain in force. Some wanted to roll back the toleration or pass a bill against occasional conformity, the practice whereby Dissenters could take communion once a year, pretend to be Anglicans, and get government office. This would have hurt the Whigs tremendously because a lot of their bedrock support was Dissenting.

At first, Anne agreed with the Tories. She wants to roll back the toleration. But I told you about Anne's learning curve. As the reign wore on, she came to realize she needed the Dissenters and the Whigs to fight her war. She also realized that the Tory program was really divisive, so she backed off and began to support the toleration. By now, you've figured out that everything came down to the war. To recap, the War of the Spanish Succession, sometimes known in America as Queen Anne's War, would decide the

thrones of Spain and Britain, confirm or undo the Revolution Settlement, and settle the balance of power in Europe and North America for a generation. Virtually, the entire course comes down to this war.

The principal combatants were, on the French side, France, Castilian Spain—which was loyal to the Bourbon candidate, Phillippe V (Felipe V)—and from 1703, Bavaria. On the British side, or the Grand Alliance side, you had England, Scotland, Ireland, the Dutch Republic, and Catalanian Spain (which was loyal to the Habsburg candidate, the would-be Carlos III, who is the son of the Holy Roman Emperor). Obviously, the Holy Roman Empire is going to be on this side (including Austria, Prussia, Hanover), and from 1703, Portugal and Savoy.

The outcome of the war would be determined by what strategy the allies pursued and how much money England would throw at it. That would be determined, in turn, by how Anne felt and which party controlled the queen's government in Parliament. Anne was all for the war. She fully understood William's point. She knew what was at stake. By the way, when Louis heard that Anne had declared war on him, he remarked condescendingly that, "He was not used to being attacked by ladies." As Philip II found with Elizabeth, this was not a lady to be trifled with.

What about Parliament? Where do the two parties stand on the war? I think if you've been paying attention to these lectures, you can pretty much anticipate. The Whigs too were all for the war. They saw Louis XIV's France as the chief danger to the peace of Europe, the Protestant faith tradition, and the English way of life. They are the equivalent of Cold Warriors in the '60s, '70s, and '80s in the United States. The Whigs fear that a Bourbon on the throne of Spain will only lead to European domination by Louis. They fear a Catholic Stuart on the throne of England would undo the Revolution Settlement and indeed, the Reformation.

Whig financiers and merchants don't want a Catholic Stuart. They like the war because of their fat war contracts, but also remember that if "James III" comes back, he's going to repudiate the government debt. All those people who invested in the government are going to lose all their money. Therefore,

the Whigs are perfectly happy to support high taxation and financial expedience to fight the war.

Tory politicians were reluctant to support another war. They saw no need, above all, for an all-out war effort. Remember, the Tories always feared Louis XIV a lot less. They felt that Dissenters, not Catholics, were the real danger to the Protestant tradition. They had no love for the Dutch or the German allies in the Grand Alliance. The Jacobite wing would be really happy to see “James III” restored to the British thrones. Tory landowners were sick of the land tax and suspicious of costly military endeavors that seemed to achieve so little. Tory ministers and politicians therefore favored a “blue-water” naval strategy. Remember, this was pinpricks: “We’ll attack the French, say, in Canada. We’ll never send armies to the European continent.”

Since Anne’s first Parliament and government were dominated by Tories, the war would start slowly for England. After awhile, however temperamentally a Tory, Anne, like William before her, would have to turn to the Whigs to fight her war. In this lecture, we encountered the last of the Stuart sovereigns, Queen Anne. Anne has never commanded much attention or respect from historians, in particular because her personality was quiet and her personal life above reproach. She was, in a word, dull, but she picked three of the ablest ministers ever to govern England. Together, they would face down both Louis XIV and the Whig and the Tory parties.

As we’ve seen, the Whigs and the Tories fought mainly over the succession, religion, and the war. We’ve also seen that those first two issues would both be decided by the third. In the next lecture, “Queen Anne’s War: The War of the Spanish Succession.”

# Queen Anne's War: 1702–10

## Lecture 43

**Blenheim, as the British insisted on calling it, was indeed a glorious victory—one of the decisive battles of history. First, it saved Vienna and thus preserved the Grand Alliance. It knocked Bavaria out of the war, thus depriving Louis of his principal ally. ... More importantly, the battle destroyed the myth of Louis XIV's invincibility.**

**T**he War of the Spanish Succession, sometimes known in America as “Queen Anne’s war,” would decide the thrones of Spain and Britain and settle the balance of power in Europe and in North America for a generation. The principal combatants were, on the French side, France, Castillian Spain (loyal to the Bourbon candidate, “Felipe V”), and (from 1703) Bavaria versus, on the British (or Grand Alliance) side, England, Scotland, and Ireland; the Dutch Republic; Catalanian Spain (loyal to an Austrian Habsburg candidate, “Carlos III”); and most of the Holy Roman Empire, including Austria, Prussia, Hanover, (from 1703) Portugal, and Savoy.

At first, the Grand Alliance moved cautiously. They were still intimidated by the reputation of Louis XIV. The queen’s ministry had to please a Tory Parliament by pursuing a cheaper “blue-water” strategy. This stalemate was broken in 1704. Late in 1703, the French and Bavarians invaded Austria, threatening to wreck the Grand Alliance. In the summer of 1704, the Duke of Marlborough responded by marching south from Flanders, meeting up with Prince Eugene of Savoy’s allied army marching north, and blocking the way to Vienna. The result was one of the great military marches in history: some 40,000 troops covering 250 miles in six weeks.

Marlborough and Eugene cornered a superior French and Bavarian army on 2 August 1704 near the village of Blindheim on the Danube. For the first time in recent memory, the French army broke and ran. The allies killed or captured 30,000 troops. A total of 28 regiments and 18 generals surrendered. Blenheim, as the British called it, was one of the decisive battles of history. It saved Vienna, thus preserving the Grand Alliance. It knocked Bavaria out of

the war, thus depriving Louis XIV of his principal ally. It destroyed the myth of Louis XIV's invincibility. It inspired the allies and the British taxpayer to support Marlborough's land war. That support would make possible of a series of crushing victories over the French won by Marlborough and others: Ramillies in 1706, Oudenarde in 1708, Malplaquet in 1709, and Bouchain in 1710. In 1706, Prince Eugene threw the French out of Italy. These victories destroyed the flower of the French army and preserved the Netherlands and the Holy Roman Empire.

Louis did better in the Spanish theater of war. The British and Catalonians won early victories at Vigo and Gibraltar in 1704. But the Castillian Spanish and French smashed allied armies at Almanza in 1707 and Brihuega in 1710. This meant that although the Dutch Republic, Revolution Settlement, and Hanoverian succession were safe, Spain might very well be lost to the Bourbons.

The final significance of Marlborough's victories was that, in convincing the queen and British voters that the Whigs were right about the war, they boosted Whig fortunes in government and Parliament. The queen began to employ more Whigs in office, and they began to win elections. The Tories, in their frustration, grew desperate in pursuit of their agenda. In 1704, they offended the queen and nation by attempting to "tack" a bill banning occasional conformity onto the land tax bill. This attempt to hold funding for the war hostage to religious intolerance failed miserably. In 1705, they insulted the queen by moving in Parliament that the Church was in danger under her administration and that a member of the Hanoverian family ought to be invited to Britain in case she should grow senile. These moves convinced Anne that the Tories were irresponsible party ideologues, leading her to appoint even more Whigs under the ostensibly moderate Marlborough and Godolphin.

The country followed the queen's lead, returning Whig majorities in the elections of 1705 and 1708. Led by Marlborough and Godolphin, who began to work closely with the Junto, these Whig Parliaments achieved some notable legislation. They avidly funded the war, thus making possible Marlborough's victories. In response to the Tory suggestion of a Hanoverian visit, the Whigs passed the Regency Act of 1706. This act decreed that



Parliament would remain in session after the death of the queen, and a Regency Council, composed of Hanoverian supporters from both parties, would govern the nation until the arrival of the Elector. It also repealed much of the anti-monarchical legislation of the Act of Settlement: The Whigs expected to be in power under a Hanoverian and they did not want to weaken the executive.

To ensure a Hanoverian succession in both kingdoms, they secured an Act of Union with Scotland in 1707. The Scots, angry at their second-class treatment from London, in particular, their exclusion from the trading system established by the Navigation Acts, threatened in 1703 to name the Pretender as their next sovereign. When union was proposed, they were reluctant to give up their national sovereignty, but trading privileges and bribes made the deal palatable. The result was a new state: Great Britain.

The Act of Union was the high water mark of Whig fortunes under Queen Anne. As the decade drew to a close, the overconfident Whig ministry began to offend both the queen and the electorate. First, Anne and her subjects began to wonder why Marlborough's recurring victories did not lead to a peace. The harvests of 1708–1709

were so bad that the French peasantry could no longer pay taxes and, in March 1709, Louis sued for peace. He was willing to concede nearly all the allied demands: Spain, Italy, the West Indies, fortress towns on the Dutch border, and the Hanoverian succession. But when the Whig diplomats demanded further that Louis use his own troops to dislodge "Felipe V" from Spain, he decided that he would rather continue fighting the British. The queen and her people began to believe Tory charges that the Whigs were prolonging the war to enrich the Duke of Marlborough and government contractors and maintain a standing army.

The Whigs further offended the country when, in 1709–1710, they prosecuted an Anglican clergyman, Rev. Henry Sacheverell, on a charge of seditious libel for an intemperate sermon attacking the Dissenters, the

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**The queen and her people began to believe Tory charges that the Whigs were prolonging the war to enrich the Duke of Marlborough.**

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existing government, and the Revolution. Godolphin and the Whigs believed that a show trial was necessary to defend themselves and the Revolution. The Tories and most ordinary people could see only that the Whigs were attacking an Anglican priest. When his indictment was announced in March 1710, many ordinary Londoners rioted, attacking Dissenting meeting houses.

Anne was further offended by the Junto's tendency to ignore her wishes and attempt to foist a completely Whig ministry on her. By 1708–1709, even such moderate Tories as Robert Harley had left the ministry. Anne's friendship with the Churchills fell apart as they insisted on the Whig point of view.

Following the death of Prince George in the fall of 1708, Queen Anne felt alone. In the spring and summer of 1710, Anne, following the advice of Robert Harley, engineered a ministerial coup. She began to work behind the scenes against her own ministry, urging members of Parliament to vote against Whig measures and to be lenient with Sacheverell. In April 1710, she began to remove Whigs one by one. Had Godolphin and the Whigs resigned *en masse*, the government would have been paralyzed and Anne would have had to capitulate. Instead, individual Whigs sought to cling to power, enabling Anne and Harley to pick them off one by one. In August 1710, Anne removed Lord Treasurer Godolphin in favor of a commission to run the Treasury, dominated by Robert Harley. Anne may have been a constitutional monarch, but her powers remained great. The queen had her revenge. ■

### Suggested Reading

Bucholz and Key, *Early Modern England*, chap. 10, sec. 8–9.

Gregg, *Queen Anne*, chaps. 6–12.

Hoppit, *Land of Liberty?* chap. 4, secs. 7–8; chap. 9, secs. 3–5.

Kishlansky, *Monarchy Transformed*, chap. 13.

## Questions to Consider

1. Why were the allies and the Tories so reluctant to fight an aggressive war against Louis XIV?
2. Who was more constitutionally correct: Anne, in attempting to maintain royal freedom of maneuver, or the Whigs, in attempting to force her to bow to parliamentary realities? Who represented the future? Who, the past?

## Queen Anne's War: 1702–10

### Lecture 43—Transcript

In the last lecture, we met the last reigning Stuart, Queen Anne, and learned that the great issues of her reign all boiled down to one: Who would win the War of the Spanish Succession, or as sometimes known in America, “Queen Anne’s war.” In this lecture, we find out.

At first, both England’s ruling Tory party and England’s allies were reluctant to fight an aggressive war against the mighty Louis XIV, but the queen and her captain-general had other ideas. The Duke of Marlborough’s decisive victory at Blenheim in 1704, followed by a string of sequels, wrecked Louis XIV’s plans for European domination and allowed Anne’s ministers, working with Whig Parliaments, to pass an Act of Union with Scotland, among other important legislation.

However, by 1709–1710, the queen and the country were growing weary of war and resentful of the Whigs, who seemed to be dragging the war on and seeking to force her to employ them in perpetuity. This lecture concludes with the queen’s revenge, a series of subtle political maneuvers that divided and dismantled her Whig ministry, and so paved the way for peace.

To review, the War of the Spanish Succession, sometimes known in America as “Queen Anne’s war,” would decide the thrones of Spain and Britain and settle the balance of power in Europe and North America for a generation. As we said at the end of the last lecture, the principal combatants were, on the French side, France, Castilian Spain, and Bavaria, who supported the candidacy of “Felipe V,” Louis Phillipe, the Duke of Anjou, for the throne of Spain.

On the British side, or Grand Alliance, were England, Scotland, and Ireland; the Dutch Republic; Catalonian Spain; most of the Holy Roman Empire (including Austria, Prussia, and Hanover); and, after 1703, Portugal and Savoy. These all supported the Habsburg candidate, the Archduke Charles, to be Carlos III, the next king of Spain.

The War of the Spanish Succession would, in fact, be a world war. It would be fought in the valleys and forests of North America; on the high seas of the Atlantic, Mediterranean, and Caribbean; and on the plains of Europe. As this implies, it would test the resolve and stretch the resources of its combatants to the limit.

At first, the Grand Alliance moved cautiously. The continental allies were still intimidated by the reputation of Louis XIV. At home, the queen's ministry had to please a Tory Parliament by pursuing a cheaper "blue-water" strategy. This stalemate was broken by the French in 1703, but it would be the allies who would reap the rewards.

Late in 1703, the French and Bavarians launched an invasion of Austria that threatened to wreck the Grand Alliance. The French and the Bavarians are moving east. Specifically, their plan was to march east, capture Vienna, and knock the Holy Roman Emperor out of the war.

In response, in the summer of 1704, the Duke of Marlborough came up with a plan to march south from Flanders and meet up with the army of Prince Eugene of Savoy marching north from Italy, thus blocking the way to Vienna. The result was one of the great military marches in history: some 40,000 troops covered 250 miles in six weeks. The Duke, with the financial cooperation of Lord Treasurer Godolphin, planned every aspect of the campaign, down to having new boots and shoes waiting for the troops at predetermined intervals on the route.

Marlborough and Eugene met towards the end of June. A month later, this combined force cornered a superior French and Bavarian army under the Marshall de Tallard on 2 August 1704 between the villages of Blindheim and Hochstet on the Danube. (By the way, that date follows the old Julian calendar, which the English were using. This would be 11 or 12 August by the Gregorian calendar. The English, of course, refused to use the Gregorian calendar, because it was originated by a pope.)

The battle began with a British feint to capture the first village. This broke up the French-Bavarian center. Towards the end of the day, Marlborough committed the bulk of his army, throwing 81 squadrons of cavalry against the

exhausted enemy lines. For the first time in recent memory, the French army broke and ran for the river. In the end, the allies killed or captured 30,000 troops. A total of 28 regiments and 18 generals surrendered. Marlborough ran out of coaches with which to transport the generals.

At the end of the day, the Duke, tired but still on horseback, wrote a dispatch to his wife on the back of a tavern bill: “I have not time to say more, but beg you will give my duty to the queen and let her know her army has had a glorious victory.” After being forwarded by the Duchess, it’s said that Marlborough’s aide-de-camp, Colonel Daniel Parke, found the queen in a little alcove at Windsor playing checkers with Prince George. You can still see the alcove if you go to the royal library. It looks out over Windsor Great Park. What a moment: Anne breaking from cozy domesticity so that one of her colonels could lay the leadership of Europe at her feet. She gave him 1,000 guineas and her picture set in diamonds.

Blenheim, as the British insisted on calling it, was indeed a glorious victory—one of the decisive battles of history. First, it saved Vienna and thus preserved the Grand Alliance. It knocked Bavaria out of the war, thus depriving Louis of his principal ally. From now on, he would have to fight a defensive war. That would be hard, because the flower of the French army had been crushed at Blenheim.

More importantly, the battle destroyed the myth of Louis XIV’s invincibility. Remember, how could you miss it? Louis has cast a long shadow on European politics for half a century and at least half a dozen lectures. The major reason was the French army, which was thought to be unbeatable. Now, for the first time in decades, that army had broken and run from the field of battle. No wonder that Louis XIV forbade the word “Hochstet”, which is what the French called the battle, to be uttered in the corridors of Versailles.

The psychological effect on the allies, especially the English side, was just as pronounced in the other direction. You can almost see the allies like munchkins coming out of a forest after the Wicked Witch is dead and starting to advocate more aggressive plans—“Maybe we can invade him here, maybe we can invade him there.”

As for the English (really the British, because I want to remind you that troops from all three kingdoms fought), this was the first land victory against a continental foe that really mattered since Agincourt. Clearly, the Financial Revolution was paying off. A nation that had repeatedly embarrassed itself on the continent was now playing with the big boys, and even humbling them.

Actually, most of the troops at Blenheim were Germans, but what people remembered was Marlborough's glorious British victory. Blenheim marks Britain's coming of age as a European power.

Marlborough was heaped with honors. A grateful Holy Roman Emperor made him a prince of the empire. A grateful queen bestowed on him the royal manor of Woodstock. A grateful Parliament undertook to build a great palace for him there, called appropriately Blenheim. If you ever visit Britain, you must go see Blenheim.

Above all, a grateful nation—that is, the British taxpayer—actually began to support Marlborough's aggressive land war. According to Thomas Cook, Tory MP from Darbyshire, "The country gentlemen who have so long groaned under the weight of four shillings in the pound" (remember the land tax) "without hearing of a town taken or any enterprise endeavored, seem every day more cheerful in this war." That's what victory will do for you.

That cheerful support would make possible a series of crushing victories over the French won by Marlborough. Blenheim was followed by Ramillies in 1706, Oudenarde in 1708, Malplaquet in 1709, and Bouchain in 1710. In 1706, Prince Eugene threw the French out of Italy. These victories further decimated the French army and preserved the Netherlands and the Holy Roman Empire.

Louis did better in the Spanish theater of war. Here, the British and the Catalonians did win some early victories at Vigo and, more importantly, at Gibraltar in 1704. In 1705, they actually captured Barcelona and Madrid, but this theater overextended the allies, who, remember, are also fighting in North America and at sea. Moreover, most of the Spanish people were Castellians, and they favored the Bourbon candidate. Castilian

Spanish and French forces smashed allied armies at Almanza in 1707 and Brihuega in 1710.

This meant that while the Dutch Republic, the Revolution Settlement, and the Hanoverian succession had all been saved by Marlborough's victories—they were now secure—Spain might very well go into the Bourbon column. The allies wouldn't gain all of their war aims.

On the other hand, this was just about Louis's only success. By 1708, Marlborough's victories and the sheer expense of fighting the British financial juggernaut for so long were beginning to bring the Sun King to his knees. Hold that thought.

Domestically, by convincing the queen and British voters that the Whigs were right about the war, Marlborough's victories also had a huge effect because they led to Whig victories in Parliament. Anne began to employ more Whigs in office, and they began to win elections.

This made the Tories more frustrated. They grew desperate in pursuing their agenda. In 1704, they offended the queen and the nation by attempting to "tack" a bill against occasional conformity onto the land tax bill. This is their obsession: "We've got to stop these Dissenters from going to Anglican communion and then getting office." This offended everybody who wasn't a Tory. They were holding the war hostage to their own religious agenda.

In 1705, they insulted the queen in Parliament by moving that the Church was in danger under her administration and that a member of the Hanoverian family really ought to be invited to Britain just in case Anne should grow senile. The Tories did this not because they were convinced Hanoverians—you'll remember that many of them were Jacobites—but because they wanted to put the queen in an embarrassing position. On the one hand, like Elizabeth, Anne doesn't want to confront her own mortality. The last thing she wants is her successor living in the country. Remember that Mary, Queen of Scots/Elizabeth thing? That doesn't work out very well. On the other hand, how could she refuse without looking like a Jacobite?



This sort of behavior convinced the queen that the Tories were wreckers—irresponsible party ideologues—which led her to appoint even more Whigs under the ostensibly moderate Marlborough and Godolphin, who will themselves become more Whig. Here, we have a woman who thought of herself as a Tory, but she's finding that she has to appoint Whigs. As she appoints more Whigs, this violates Anne's desire for moderation, but what can she do? Note that all this makes Marlborough and Godolphin even more dependent on the Whigs, and eventually we're going to call them Whigs.

The country followed the queen's lead. They returned Whig majorities in the elections of 1705 and 1708. Led by Marlborough, Godolphin, and the Junto, with whom they began to work more closely, these Whig Parliaments achieved some notable legislation. First, they avidly funded the war, which made Marlborough's victories possible.

Second, at home, in response to the Tories' suggestion of a Hanoverian visit, the Whigs passed the Regency Act in 1706. This decreed that Parliament would remain in being for six months after the death of a queen. Here's an element of continuity. In addition, a Regency Council, composed of staunch Hanoverians from both parties, would govern the nation until the Elector arrived. Remember, he's in Germany. You've got to get him to England. Let me remind you that James, who's hanging out in France, is closer.

This act also repealed a lot of the anti-monarchical, anti-court legislation of the Act of Settlement. You remember it said that the king couldn't do this and the king couldn't do that. The Whigs expected to be in power under a Hanoverian and they didn't want to weaken the executive. Thus, were the Tories outmaneuvered and the Hanoverian succession strengthened.

Perhaps the Whigs greatest legislative achievement was to ensure a Hanoverian succession in both of the kingdoms that share the main part of the British Isles by finally passing an Act of Union with Scotland. We haven't visited Scotland in some time. It's about time we did.

As we saw, 100 years previously, James I had tried and failed to secure a union at the beginning of his reign. If you'll remember, he was thwarted by the longstanding hatred between these two peoples. Those hatreds and

prejudices only hardened as the 17<sup>th</sup> century wore on, and for good reason. They were exacerbated by religious differences. Remember that the English were in effect becoming more Anglican as Puritanism is sort of discredited in the Church of England. The Scots are staunch Presbyterians by and large.

There's the bitter legacy of the civil wars. Remember that the Scots started off fighting against the king, then they switched sides to the Royalists in support of Charles II, and they'd been beaten by Oliver Cromwell. Thanks to Cromwell, the two nations were actually united briefly in a union from 1654–1660, but pretty unhappily. At the Restoration, the union was dissolved and the Anglican Church was established in the northern kingdom as the Church of Scotland. Charles I got his posthumous wish. The Church of Scotland is established complete with bishops, prayer book, and persecution. Presbyterians, the majority of the country, were avidly persecuted between 1660 and 1688.

All these tensions worsened about 1680 when Charles II sent his brother, who was then Duke of York, north to use Catholic Highland troops to put down Presbyterian rebellions. During the Revolution of 1688–1689, the Presbyterian Kirk took revenge. They seized power as soon as James falls. The Kirk seizes power. The Church of Scotland is disestablished, and the authority of the Crown is weakened.

The Scots still had plenty of reason for resentment. For example, towards the end of the Williamite campaign to pacify Scotland in 1692, in the Highlands, some 40 men, women, and children of the McDonald clan were massacred at Glencoe Pass. The massacre was actually supported by leading Presbyterians. Remember these are Highland Catholics by and large. The idea of a massacre of those who opposed William still bred a lot of resentment among moderates in Scotland. By the way, the question of whether William knew and approved has always been debated by historians. Generally, the consensus is he didn't. This is another one of those things done in his name that wasn't necessarily his fault.

Worse, Scotland remains poor and is left out of the Navigation Acts, the English trading system. Remember, there's a commercial boom in England. The English are going from strength to strength. The Scots have to trade as

if they're the French or the Spanish. They're not part of the system, which means they have to send all their goods through English ports, which means that those goods get a markup. This makes it harder for Scots to trade.

In 1698, the Scots attempt to set up their own American trading company and colony at Darien in Panama. The Spanish own Panama. They were incensed at this, and William needs the Spanish for his Partition Treaties—for his plan to divide the Spanish Empire after Carlos dies—so the colony gets no English support. It fails: As a result, 2,000 lives and some 40 percent of Scots monetary capital were lost.

This happened amidst five disastrous harvests in 1695–1699, which produced real famine. Many Scots wondered if the English were trying to starve them out of existence. This explains their reaction to the accession of Queen Anne. In 1703, the Scots Parliament passes a series of laws that can only be interpreted as revenge. First, the Act anent Peace and War decrees that after Anne's death, all foreign policy decisions made by London would have to be reviewed by the Scottish Parliament. Second, the Wine and Wool Act allows for trade with France, even during the war. (“We’re still going to keep trading with them. It’s not our war.”)

Third, and most alarmingly, there was the Act of Security, which states that at Anne's death, the Scottish Parliament would choose Scotland's next sovereign. You know what this implies: They might not choose the Hanoverian. They might go for the Pretender. Stop and think about what that would mean. That would mean that the restored Stuart would be on England's northern border. There goes the Act of Settlement, the Act of Regency, the Glorious Revolution, the victory at Blenheim—everything would be a dead letter if this guy has a land base from which to invade England. From there, he could easily launch an invasion and retake all of his father's kingdoms, no doubt with French support. The Auld Alliance lives again.

Once the Whigs get into power in London, they know they have to do something about this. In 1706, they propose a legislative union with Scotland. Of course, Scots are reluctant to give up their national sovereignty. It's the only thing they have—this threat that they'll pick James Stuart. Finally, Scottish poverty and English wealth won the day in two ways.

First, the English offered full membership in the English trading system: “You get a piece of the pie. You can be part of the Commercial Revolution.” Second, they also offered liberal bribes. They bribed Scottish peers and MPs. They bribed Scotland: They offered a payment of £398,000, called the “equivalent.” One English minister crowed, “We bought them.”

But the Scots won concessions too. In the new Parliament of Great Britain, they got 16 peers and 45 MPs. That’s proportionally less than the Scottish population, but it’s a lot more than would be justified by how much the Scots pay in the land tax or the excise. In other words, the Scots were not pulling their weight on the war but the Act of Union said, “We’re okay with that.”

The northern kingdom also retained Scottish law and the supremacy of the Presbyterian Church. The Tories hated that.

The Act of Union, creating the nation of Great Britain, was passed in the spring of 1707. Its first Parliament—Great Britain’s first Parliament—met in the fall of that year.

As I’m sure you can imagine, the union was always controversial in Scotland. Many people viewed it as a shameful, venal abdication of national sovereignty—tantamount to enslavement by the ancient enemy England. In fact, England has always been the dominant partner, as I believe I pointed out in Lecture Two. Both the government in London and individual English people have often treated the Scots as second-class citizens.

But the union was nevertheless a good thing. It brought economic prosperity in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and that laid the groundwork for the tremendous flowering of Scottish civilization called the “Scottish Enlightenment.” It’s hard to see how any of that would have happened under the rule of a Catholic Stuart.

As for England and the Whigs, the union secured the Hanoverian succession in Scotland. That’s what they got. That’s what they wanted.

The Act of Union was the high water mark of Whig fortunes under Queen Anne. As the decade drew to a close, the overconfident Whig ministry began to offend the queen and the electorate on the three major issues of the reign.

First, Anne and her subjects began to wonder, as you may have wondered, with all these victories by Marlborough, why hasn't the war ended? Why isn't Louis brought to the table?

At first, the victories were wildly popular. The queen would ride in procession through cheering London crowds to St. Paul's Cathedral, where she was the first monarch since Elizabeth to hold national festivals of thanksgiving. These were tremendous cultural occasions. After awhile, people began to wonder why the French never surrendered or why the war never ended. After the bloody battle of Malplaquet in 1709, in which 35,000 troops died on both sides, Anne is supposed to have remarked, "When will this bloodshed ever cease?"

One of the reasons for the comment is that the English had had an opportunity to end the war the previous spring. The harvests of 1708–1709 were terrible. This was hard on the British yeoman or husbandman, but it was a catastrophe for the French peasant. Remember, it's the French peasant who's paying for this war. Since the French peasant could no longer pay his taxes, Louis had to sue for peace in March 1709.

It turns out that Louis was willing to concede almost everything: Spain, Italy, the West Indies, fortress towns on the Dutch border, and the Hanoverian succession. The British had won, but the Whig diplomats still weren't satisfied. They demanded that should "Felipe V" refuse to leave the Spanish throne, Louis would use his troops to evict his own grandson. At which point, Louis replied, "If I have to make war, I'd rather fight the British than my own children."

The queen and her people were bitterly disappointed, hence her comment. They began to believe Tory charges that the Marlborough-Godolphin ministry and the Whigs were intentionally prolonging the war to keep themselves in power and to enrich themselves. The Duke of Marlborough and other army officers sold army commissions. There were all those government contractors—they're all Whigs. There were the moneyed men, who play with the stocks and the bonds and need the war to keep the debt going.

There was also a fear that this was a Whig plot to maintain a standing army and to attack the liberties of the subjects. Note how the parties have shifted. Remember, it used to be the Whigs who made that kind of accusation.

This is all probably unfair. There's no evidence that the Whigs consciously wanted the war to continue for their own gain. What was probably happening was that they're like old Cold Warriors. They can't see it: Louis is done. Louis is finished. They'll never believe it. They'll never believe a peace treaty with Louis. They'll always believe that he's the greatest threat to Protestantism and the English way of life. They can't see a peace. They just can't do it.

The Whigs further offended the country on the issue of religion. In 1709–1710, they prosecuted an Anglican clergyman, the Reverend Henry Sacheverell, on a charge of seditious libel. Sacheverell was a well-known, high Tory rabble-rouser and general hothead who had preached an intemperate sermon on 5 November 1709. That's the anniversary of the Gunpowder Plot and also William's landing in 1688. That's what he concentrated on: the Revolution.

In *The Perils of False Brethren in Church and State*, Sacheverell attacked the Revolution, the Whigs, the Dissenters, and the Marlborough-Godolphin ministry as, “double-dealing practical atheists and bloodsuckers that brought our kingdom into a consumption.” The sermon was wildly popular. It was printed and sold 100,000 copies, which may tell you something about feelings about the tax burden of the war.

These were stupid things to say in public, but it was even stupider to make an issue of them. The Whig government, and by now Marlborough and Godolphin are basically Whigs, decided that the Revolution had to be publicly defended and Sacheverell made an example of. They charged him with seditious libel and impeached him in Parliament.

If you're an Anglican, you're looking at this and you're thinking, “Number one, what Sacheverell said needed to be said. It's what everybody's thinking. Number two, all I can see is that a Whig ministry, associated with those darn Dissenters, is picking on a poor Anglican clergyman.” When the indictment was announced on 1 March 1710, London Anglicans rioted, tearing down

Dissenting meeting houses. They made the connection between the Whigs and the Dissenters.

Finally, the Whigs offended Anne on the issue of sovereignty. Anne had had to turn to the Whigs to fight her war, but she'd never warmed to them. Part of the reason for this is that they were very aggressive in demanding office, and therefore demanding that she fire Tories. Remember, Anne's idea is a moderate ministry with men from both parties. The Junto, in particular, tended to want to force her to do this and wanted to "storm the closet." They didn't show her a lot of the kind of respect that Tories naturally do to a monarch. She called the Junto the "five tyrannizing lords."

By 1708–1709, even moderate Tories like Robert Harley have left the ministry. Anne's friendship with the Churchills was also falling apart as they grew more Whig. Her feelings for the Duchess of Marlborough had turned sour because of the latter's constant insistence on the Whig point of view. Her friendship with the Duke suffered when, in 1709, he demanded to be made captain-general for life. She saw all of this as an attempt to restrict her freedom of action and diminish the prerogative.

Anne was probably at her lowest point following the death of Prince George in the fall of 1708. She was surrounded by Whig ministers. She was all alone. But by the beginning of 1710, Anne had had enough. She began to plot revenge. She had advising her Robert Harley, who, though officially banished by the court, was being smuggled up and down the backstairs by one of Anne's bedchamber attendants, a woman named Abigail Masham.

Following Harley's advice, Anne used the growing unpopularity of the Whigs, the war, and the Dissenters to engineer a ministerial coup. You see what's happening: As the Whigs offend the country, that gives Anne leverage. That's an interesting comment on the state of monarchy. The queen can do things if she has the backing of the country.

First, early in the year, she began to work behind the scenes against her own ministry, urging members of Parliament, in the privacy of her closet, to vote against Whig measures and to be lenient with Sacheverell. Second, she denied Marlborough's petition to be made captain-general for life.

Marlborough responded by blaming Masham's court influence: "I have deserved better than to be made a sacrifice to the unreasonable passion of a bedchamber woman." It's a rather odd comment coming from a man who had first risen in the Duchess of Cleveland's bedchamber, if you'll remember.

At one point, he and the Whigs promoted a parliamentary address to remove Masham from the queen's household. Note what this would mean: Parliament interfering in whom the queen employs in her bedchamber. Masham was Anne's best nurse. Once again, the queen closets with various political leaders, trying to persuade them, often with tears in her eyes, "Don't do this."

In fact, everybody agreed that this was really going too far. What's the point of being queen if you can't even appoint who's going to serve in your own bedchamber?

The prestige of the monarchy was still there. Anne got her way on both issues and that gave her courage. In April 1710, she began to remove Whigs from office one by one, beginning with her lord chamberlain, Henry Grey, Marquis of Kent. Note she started with somebody who's not all that important.

Had Godolphin and the Whigs all resigned *en masse* as a modern British cabinet would do, she would have had to crumble. The government would have been paralyzed and Anne would have capitulated. But instead, individual Whigs sought to hang onto power. She'd fire one and say, "But you're safe. Don't worry. Just be quiet." She was able to pick them off one by one.

Finally, in August 1710, Anne removed Lord Treasurer Godolphin in favor of a commission to run the Treasury, dominated by Robert Harley. Anne may have been a constitutional monarch, but her powers remained great. The queen had her revenge.

In this lecture, we saw how the War of the Spanish Succession was turned in the allies' favor by the generalship of the Duke of Marlborough and the financial resources of the British state. Marlborough's victories enabled



the Whigs to achieve power and pass landmark legislation ensuring the Hanoverian succession and the union with Scotland.

But the Whigs were too bound by their worldview to realize that Louis XIV was finished, so they were unable to make peace. That failure, combined with their apparent hostility to the Church of England (or at least one of its clergyman), and their overbearing treatment of Queen Anne, cost them her favor and popularity in the country.

Would the new ministry under Robert Harley bring peace, defend the Church, and please the queen? Only the next lecture will tell.

# Queen Anne's Peace: 1710–14

## Lecture 44

**Treaty of Utrecht was, in fact, a masterstroke of diplomacy. It confirmed and completed the work of the Revolution of 1688–1689, and it ensured British superiority in Europe for a generation and beyond.**

In the late summer of 1710, Queen Anne and her new first minister, Robert Harley, called a general election. The election was fought over the issues that had long divided Whigs and Tories—the succession, religion, and above all, war and peace. The landslide Tory victory gave the queen and her minister a mandate to end the war. Nevertheless, the peace negotiations took two and a half years. The negotiations were opposed by the Whigs, who continued to fear Louis XIV and demand, in the face of military reality and the wishes of the majority of the Spanish people, that the Bourbons be denied the Spanish throne. They were also opposed by most of the allies, who feared that Harley would secure an advantageous peace for Britain at their expense.

To secure their ends, both sides engaged in some shady dealing. In 1711, the Whigs attempted to buy Tory votes on the peace by promising to support a bill against occasional conformity—thus abandoning their Dissenting constituency. When this threatened to wreck the peace in the House of Lords, Anne suddenly created 12 new Tory peers to vote for the treaty. The allies did their best to wreck the negotiations. In return, Harley (named Earl of Oxford in 1711) conducted secret negotiations, preliminary to the “real” peace conference at the Hague, without their knowledge. Finally, to sweeten the deal for Louis XIV, Anne dismissed the Duke of Marlborough in December 1711. Unbeknownst to her allies, she issued secret restraining orders to his replacement, the Duke of Ormond.

The Treaty of Utrecht of 1713, and the later Treaty of Rastadt negotiated by the Holy Roman Emperor in 1714, appeared to both the Whigs and the allies to be a sellout. Felipe V remained on the throne of Spain, albeit with a promise that the crowns of Spain and France would never be worn by the same person. The allies received territory, but not so much as Marlborough's

victories had led them to expect. The Dutch received barrier forts on their southern border. The Holy Roman Emperor received territory in Italy and the Spanish Netherlands (roughly, modern-day Belgium). Savoy claimed Sicily. Britain received territory and other concessions: Gibraltar and Minorca in the Mediterranean; Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, and Hudson's Bay in Canada; St. Kitts in the Caribbean; the *asiento*, that is, the exclusive right to sell slaves to the Spanish New World; and recognition of the Hanoverian succession by Louis XIV.

The Whigs believed that these paltry acquisitions after the expenditure of so much blood and treasure would impeach Oxford in the next reign. But, in fact, the Treaty of Utrecht was a masterstroke of diplomacy, ensuring British superiority in Europe and beyond for a generation. It did not matter that a Bourbon sat on the throne of Spain, because both Spain and France were exhausted, financially and militarily, after so many years of warfare. Louis XIV would never again challenge for European supremacy or pose a threat to the Hanoverian succession.

Britain's territorial acquisitions sealed her status as the wealthiest trading nation on earth: Gibraltar ensured strategic control of the Mediterranean and its trade. The Canadian territories provided furs and Grand Banks fish to clothe and feed Europe. Britain's Caribbean possessions and dominance of the slave trade ensured control of the notorious "triangular trade" in slaves, tobacco, and sugar from the New World. As a result, the British would be the wealthiest and most powerful nation in Europe: British trade produced money, which produced military superiority, which produced victory, which produced colonies, which produced more trade. In other words, the Commercial Revolution begat the Financial Revolution, which begat Blenheim, which begat the Treaty of Utrecht, which begat an empire, which begat more commerce. Eventually, the profits from this process would be invested in the first Industrial Revolution, thus further extending the British lead. The French never figured this out, which explains why they lost or drew six of seven wars against Britain between 1688 and 1815. It should never be forgotten that these policies also begat the misery of the Irish people and the atrocity of the slave trade.

Anne had appointed Robert Harley her first minister in 1710 and named him Earl of Oxford and Lord Treasurer in 1711, not only to secure a peace but also to save her from the “five tyrannizing lords” of the Whig Junto. She expected him to maintain a coalition ministry employing moderate men from both parties. Unfortunately, this was impossible for two reasons. The peace apart, the political nation was still torn over religion and the succession. Moreover, the parliamentary elections of 1710 and 1713 were Tory landslides. This made it difficult to prevent that party, led by Henry St. John, Viscount Bolingbroke, from simply hijacking the ministry on these issues. Thus, while the Tories pressured Oxford to appoint them and follow their party line on these issues, Oxford had to please the queen by trying to hang onto Whigs.

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**The Tories ... still hoped that, on her deathbed, Anne would restore her half-brother, James.**

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In the area of religion, the Tories sought to roll back the toleration, drive Dissenters (including many Whigs) out of public life, and restore the monopoly of the Church of England. Both Anne and Oxford saw this as needlessly divisive. In 1711, Anne and Oxford agreed to bills to build 50 London churches and to ban occasional conformity. Far more seriously, in 1714, they agreed to the Schism Act, forbidding Dissenters from teaching or keeping schools. Not surprisingly, nearly every Whig had resigned office by 1714. Oxford was failing the queen in his attempt to maintain a moderate ministry. But it was the succession that brought Oxford down. That issue began to grow more pressing after 1710 as the queen's health began to fail.

The Whigs supported the Hanoverian accession unequivocally. They were in close contact with the Electress Sophia and, after her death in May 1714, with her son and successor, the Elector Georg Ludwig. The Tories remained split between a Hanoverian and a Jacobite wing. The latter still hoped that, on her deathbed, Anne would restore her half-brother, James. Because the Tories were by far the largest group in the Commons, Oxford tried to convince both Hanoverians and Jacobites that he was one of them. He wrote to both James and Georg Ludwig, promising his support. He made conflicting promises to supporters of both men. Finally, in the summer of

1714, the queen discovered his ruse. After an emotional meeting on 27 July, Anne demanded Oxford's resignation as Lord Treasurer.

Now Anne had no choice: She would have to give in either to Bolingbroke's Tories or Marlborough's Whigs. In fact, she never had to make the choice. On the morning of 30 July, she became desperately ill and began to sink into a coma. That afternoon, the queen's privy councilors met and advised her to name as Lord Treasurer the Duke of Shrewsbury. Shrewsbury was a consensus candidate, a Whig who had served in Oxford's increasingly Tory ministry. He was one of the "immortal seven" who had invited William of Orange to invade in 1688; therefore, he was a staunch defender of the Revolution of 1688–1689 and the Hanoverian succession. Anne accepted their recommendation, handing the staff of office to Shrewsbury. She died, the last monarch of the Stuart line, at 7:45 A.M. on 1 August 1714. Georg Ludwig, Elector of Hanover, was proclaimed that afternoon as King George of England, Scotland, and Ireland. ■

### Suggested Reading

Bucholz and Key, *Early Modern England*, chap. 10, secs. 10–11.

Gregg, *Queen Anne*, chaps. 12–14.

Hoppit, *Land of Liberty?* chap. 4, secs. 8–10; chap. 9, secs. 6–8.

Kishlansky, *Monarchy Transformed*, chap. 13.

### Questions to Consider

1. Were Queen Anne and Oxford right to abandon the allies?
2. Why did the Jacobites fail to act as Queen Anne lay dying?

# Queen Anne's Peace: 1710–14

## Lecture 44—Transcript

In the last lecture, we saw England achieve unparalleled military victories over the French in the War of the Spanish Succession, but no peace. Rather, the Marlborough-Godolphin ministry, now fully dominated by the Whigs, proved itself incapable of stopping the war, probably because its traditional Francophobia blinded its leaders to the fact that Louis XIV was effectively finished by 1710.

The Whig ministry had also managed to offend the country in the area of religion by the Sacheverell prosecution and to offend the queen on the issue of sovereignty. Queen Anne reacted by first undermining her own ministry, and then dismissing them in the summer of 1710. This lecture portrays the rise of the new ministry under Robert Harley, to be named Earl of Oxford from 1711, and its attempts to solve the problems of peace, religion, and the succession.

The lecture concludes with Oxford's fall over the last issue, the final illness and death of the queen, and the peaceful accession of the Hanoverian as George I.

In the late summer of 1710, Queen Anne and her new first minister, Robert Harley, dismissed the Whig Parliament, called a general election, and went to the country with a promise of peace. The result was a Tory landslide. This gave the queen and her minister a mandate to end the war. Nevertheless, the peace negotiations took two and a half years. They were opposed by the Whigs, who continued to fear Louis XIV and to demand, in the face of military reality and the wishes of the majority of the Spanish people, that the Bourbon be denied the Spanish throne.

The peace was also opposed by most of the allies who feared that Harley would secure concessions for Britain at their expense. To secure their ends, all sides—the Tories, the Whigs, Britain, and her allies—resorted to some very shady dealing. For example, in December 1711, the Whigs tried to buy Tory votes on the peace by promising to support a bill against occasional conformity. In doing this, they're attacking their own Dissenting

constituency. They're selling the Dissenters up the river, but they're so desperate because they're so fearful of Louis XIV.

In return, a group of dissident Tories, led by the Earl of Nottingham (who's been shut out of the ministry), supported a motion in the House of Lords for "no peace without Spain. We'll sign no peace unless we get Spain for the Habsburgs." The motion passed. That threatened to wreck the peace process before the start of formal negotiations.

Anne had a trick up her sleeve, however. She responded a few days later by using her prerogative powers to create 12 new Tory peers in the House of Lords. She just packed the Lords with people that she knew would vote for the peace. This tactic provided the votes necessary for the peace to go forward. The Whigs charged that Anne had violated the spirit of the post-1688 constitution by pushing her prerogative powers to their limits. So much of the English Constitution is good behavior and bad behavior. Clearly, Queen Anne would do anything to secure a peace.

The allies too did their best to wreck the negotiations. Often in concert with the Whigs, they would write to various people. They'd pass notes to various diplomats. In return, Harley, named Earl of Oxford in 1711, actually conducted secret negotiations preliminary to the "real" ones. All the details were worked out before the peace conference at Utrecht began. As this came out, it led the allies to charge that they were being left in the lurch by "perfidious Albion."

Finally, to sweeten the deal for Louis XIV and to make sure that nothing went wrong (remember, in these negotiations, they're trying to figure out where all the borders are going to be and the last thing they need is for Marlborough to go on a rampage and launch an invasion of France), the Duke of Marlborough was dismissed in December 1711. Then, unbeknownst to the allies, Queen Anne issued secret restraining orders to his replacement, the Duke of Ormond. It is therefore little wonder that the Treaty of Utrecht of 1713 and the later Treaty of Rastadt, negotiated by the Holy Roman Emperor in 1714, seemed to both Whigs and the allies to be a sellout. The Duke of Anjou remained on the throne of Spain as Felipe V, albeit with a promise

that the crowns of Spain and France would never again be worn by the same person. Didn't we see this promise before?

The allies received territory, but not nearly as much as Marlborough and Eugene's victories had led them to expect. The Dutch got a series of barrier forts on the southern border. Their guns now faced France (these were French forts that now go over to the Dutch, and the guns are turned around). The Holy Roman Emperor received territory in Italy, as well as the Spanish Netherlands, roughly the equivalent of modern-day Belgium. There's actually a buffer zone between the Dutch Republic and the French. Savoy claimed Sicily.

Britain got some territory and other concessions: Gibraltar and Minorca in the Mediterranean; Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, and Hudson's Bay in Canada; St. Kitts in the Caribbean; the *asiento* (that is, the exclusive right to sell African slaves to the Spanish New World, plus trading rights with the Spanish Empire); and finally, the promise of recognition of the Hanoverian succession by Louis XIV.

The Whigs, hoping for a Habsburg Spain and huge swaths of French territory or maybe Canada, thought of these as paltry acquisitions after the expenditure of so much blood and treasure. As for Louis's promises that the crowns of Spain and France would never be united, they'd seen Louis's promises before. There was also his promise to abandon the "Pretender" and recognize the Hanoverian succession. They didn't believe that one either. In the next reign, they would impeach the Earl of Oxford for squandering Marlborough's victories.

But they shouldn't have done that, for the Treaty of Utrecht was, in fact, a masterstroke of diplomacy. It confirmed and completed the work of the Revolution of 1688–1689, and it ensured British superiority in Europe for a generation and beyond. First, the settlement in Spain could not have been otherwise. The majority of the Spanish people wanted the Bourbon candidate. The allies had lost the Iberian Peninsula in the defeats at Almanza and Brihuega. The military situation was irretrievable.



The allied candidate for the Spanish throne, Carlos III, had in the meantime succeeded as Holy Roman Emperor. His elder brother, the Emperor Joseph, had died unexpectedly in 1711, which means that he was the Holy Roman Emperor. This means that if the Whigs had gotten their way, they would have replaced a massive Bourbon Empire with a massive Habsburg one. They would, in fact, have recreated the empire of Charles V.

In fact, it didn't matter who sat on the throne of Spain. Both Spain and France were exhausted financially and militarily after so many years of warfare. Oxford was smart enough to see that. He knew that Louis XIV would never again challenge the peace of Europe or pose a threat to the Hanoverian succession. He would expel James from his dominions.

In 1715, the Sun King would die, confessing on his deathbed that he had perhaps been, "Too much in love with war." Because Louis had outlived his son and his grandson (apart from Phillippe) and because France had no choice but to obey the terms of Utrecht, Louis XIV would be succeeded by his five-year-old great grandson, Louis XV. This little kid, combined with France's prostrate finances, meant that England's ancient enemy would be in no shape to fight a major European war again for at least a generation.

In the meantime, Britain's territorial acquisitions sealed its status as the wealthiest trading nation on earth. Gibraltar: that's all Harley wanted. Gibraltar: a little rock at the western end of the Mediterranean, which of course ensures strategic control of the whole Mediterranean area. If you have ever seen the war film *Das Boot*, you'll remember German U-boats trying to get into the Mediterranean during World War II and being blocked at Gibraltar. You couldn't touch the British because of the strategic importance of Gibraltar.

The Canadian territories may have been bleak and remote (these are maybe not the parts of Canada you'd go for immediately), but they provided furs and Grand Banks fish to clothe and feed Europe, and more than a foothold in Canada.

Britain's Caribbean possessions and dominance of the slave trade ensured control of the notorious "triangular trade" in slaves, tobacco, and sugar from

the New World. Oxford has a ruthless streak. The sugar trade, in particular, would prove the most valuable trade in the world in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Sugar was the oil of its day.

Britain had also finally won entrance into the Spanish trading system. Remember what Hawkins and Drake had fought for? Now the British can finally trade with the Spanish colonies. There are obviously deep moral implications to what has just been worked out here. I am going to discuss that, but I want to save it for a subsequent lecture. For the moment, I want to concentrate on what this does for Britain materially.

As a result of these new commercial arrangements, the British would be the wealthiest and most powerful nation in Europe: British trade produced money, which produced military superiority, which produced victories, which produced colonies, which produced more trade. In other words, the Commercial Revolution begat the Financial Revolution, which begat the victory at Blenheim, which begat the Treaty of Utrecht, which begat an empire, which begat more commerce, and so on and so on. It's a cycle that will grow and grow and make Britain more powerful.

Eventually the profit from that process would be invested in more wars: the War of the Austrian Succession (1742–1748), the Seven Years' War (1756–1763), the American Revolutionary War (1775–1783), the French Revolutionary Wars (1793–1801), and the Napoleonic Wars (1803–1815)—only one of which would be an unequivocal French victory.

These profits would also be poured into the Industrial Revolution, thus further extending Britain's economic lead. The British system of government and war finance that Professor John Brewer calls the “sinews of power” explains why Britain won most of its wars with France, culminating on the field of Waterloo in 1815. It's why Britain replaced France as the most powerful country in Europe, built a world-encircling empire in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and became the first industrial nation and the richest country on earth for most of not only the 18<sup>th</sup> but also the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

At this point, American listeners are saying, “Well, wait a minute. They lost a good bit of that empire during the American Revolutionary War.” Let

me take a minute and advance about 50 years and talk about that. One way to think about this, rather differently than the way it's taught in American history books, is to realize that this is the only war in which the French had our help. In fact, the loss of America would be psychologically devastating to the English. There's no question. It led to a reform movement in the 1780s. However, it would also be an economic and military blessing. The British no longer had to pay for our defense, but they continued to trade with America.

After beating the French for good in 1815, the British would go on to extend their empire in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. As I promised in the first lecture, the fate of England under the Tudors and the Stuarts goes far to explain the fate of the world in the course of the next two centuries. The French never figured this out. They never figured out the connections among war, trade, finance, and empire, which explains why they lost or drew six of seven 18<sup>th</sup> century wars against Britain and became a second-rate power in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Put another way, while the French were entering a period of decline, the British were going from strength to strength.

This reminds me of a story—perhaps my favorite story in all of Western civilization—related by Samuel Johnson in his *Lives of the Poets*, which I think sums up the last few lectures and what we've been talking about in this whole experience between Britain and France. To understand the story, you have to remember how Louis financed his wars. He taxed his peasants until they bled dry. Remember that William and Anne had managed to find a way to finance their wars by drawing on and increasing the commercial wealth of the country. Remember too, that Louis had also plowed his peasants' money into the magnificent palace of Versailles, while William and Anne never built a great palace. They poured all of their resources into fighting and winning these wars. After Whitehall Palace burns down in 1698, William and Anne live in St. James Palace, which is tiny and cramped. If you go to London, that will be obvious.

Here's the story: Back at the end of the Nine Years' War, William III had sent Matthew Prior to France to negotiate that Partition Treaty with Louis XIV. The French diplomats were anxious to overawe Prior with French power. In our day, they would have shown him their missiles, but they didn't have missiles; they had Versailles. There they are, tromping Prior around

Versailles, hoping that he'll be impressed. The French knew full well that the British monarch could not exploit his people in the way Louis XIV had done, because there was Parliament to stop him. They knew further that the British monarch had spent all of his money on fighting their master and that he had no palace of the size and magnificence of Versailles.

At the end of the tour, they turn to Prior and they ask him what he thought of their master's house, probably with an air of superiority. Prior turns to them and replies, "The monuments of my master's actions are to be seen everywhere but in his own house."

The British Crown had found a way to fight the French and enrich its people in the process. Louis had only brought his people poverty and misery.

Of course, what Prior didn't say was that some of the monuments of his master's and subsequent masters' actions, such as the Irish Penal Code or later the *asiento* and slave trade, were cruel and shameful. But I will make an argument in Lecture Forty-Eight that ultimately the Commercial, Financial, and Glorious Revolutions also begat the tools of democracy, which would eventually be used by these very oppressed peoples to secure freedom from their British masters. I can still on this one, I think, have a bit of my cake and eat it too and argue that because of these developments, the British developed ideals and a system of government that these oppressed peoples would hold up as a mirror to the British and say, "This is shameful. You must change it." On the other hand, the French system of absolute monarchy begat the turmoil of the French Revolution. This is the ultimate legacy of the Glorious Revolution and the peace of Utrecht.

To get back to Queen Anne and Robert Harley: Anne had appointed Robert Harley her first minister in 1710 and named him Earl of Oxford and Lord Treasurer in 1711, not just to secure a peace but also to save her from the "five tyrannizing lords" of the Whig Junto. That is, she expected him to maintain a coalition ministry. Remember, that's why she wasn't happy with the Whigs.

There were two problems with this. First, the parliamentary elections of 1710 and 1713 were Tory landslides. That made it very difficult to prevent that

party—led by Henry St. John, Viscount Bolingbroke, at this point—from simply hijacking the ministry: “We control all the votes in Parliament. You have to appoint us.” Bolingbroke and the Tories pressured Oxford to follow their party line and appoint more Tories. This was a problem for Oxford because to keep the queen happy, he has to hang onto Whigs.

The second reason that proved to be impossible was that the political nation was still torn over the great issues of the day, namely the peace (as we’ve seen, the Whigs wouldn’t let this rest—they would impeach Oxford in the next reign), religion, and the succession. The Whigs fought Oxford on all three issues.

You have a situation in which the Earl of Oxford is walking a tightrope (he’s my last tightrope walker in this course; I’ve used that metaphor a little bit too much). On the one hand, he has to please the Tory majority with Tory appointments and Tory policies, but he has to please the queen by hanging onto some Whigs in spite of his Tory appointments and Tory policies. As we’ve seen, Oxford walked that tightrope quite successfully on the issue of war and peace, but he would fall off because of religion and the succession.

In the area of religion, the Tories sought to roll back the toleration, drive Dissenters (and therefore Whigs) out of public life, and restore the monopoly of the Church of England. Early in her reign, Anne would have agreed with this, but by 1710–1712, both Anne and Oxford realize this is needlessly divisive. It was especially difficult for Oxford because, as you may remember, he began life as a Dissenter. He came from a Dissenting background.

Both recognized that they had to give the Tories their head on religion as the price to secure the peace. They had to please the Tories on religion to have the votes to win the peace. In 1711, Anne and Oxford agreed to build 50 London churches (that’s pretty painless), ban occasional conformity, and far more seriously, in 1714, they agreed to the Schism Act, which forbade Dissenters from teaching or keeping schools. The idea, as with the Clarendon Code, was to cut dissent off at the root and out of public life. Because so many Dissenters were Whigs, this would have had the additional advantage, from the Tory point of view, of weakening that party.

Not surprisingly, nearly every Whig had resigned office by 1714. Oxford was failing the queen in his attempt to maintain a moderate ministry.

It was the succession, however, as well as the immense pressure he bore, that brought Oxford down. The succession was always an issue because, remember, Queen Anne had been in poor health for most of her reign. Remember, she had to literally be carried to her coronation, though she was able to stand and walk at other times. By 1710, she was almost entirely lame and frequently indisposed by gout.

In the winter of 1713–1714, Anne almost died, experiencing fever and intermittent consciousness. This focused everyone’s attention on the succession and the next reign. Of course, I think you know the positions. The Whigs supported the Hanoverian accession as laid out in the Act of Settlement unequivocally—no problem. They were in close contact with the Electress Sophia and, after she died in May 1714, with her son and successor, the Elector Georg Ludwig. That’s very nice that they’re corresponding with them, but remember that the Whigs are in the minority in Parliament, and they don’t have any offices left at court. It’s the Tories who matter right now.

The Tories who were in office were split between a Hanoverian wing and a Jacobite wing. The latter still hoped that, on her deathbed, Anne would restore her half-brother, the “Pretender,” James. Because the Tories are the largest group in the Commons, Oxford has to try to keep them together to support his ministry. He has to try to convince both groups (Hanoverians and Jacobites) that he’s on their side. Indeed, Oxford may have been tempted to play kingmaker. Think about it: If he can bestow the Crown on the next King of England, he’ll be set for life, right?

He begins to negotiate with both men. “Of course, Georg, you know I’m a Hanoverian. Don’t worry about a thing.” He writes off to James, wondering if James might consider a public conversion to the Church of England: “It wouldn’t affect your private beliefs, but just for show.” He also made conflicting promises to supporters of both men.

To further confuse the issue—and this has made historians’ lives all the more difficult—during this same period that he’s speaking out of both sides of his

mouth, the pressure of maintaining this delicate balancing act clearly began to wear on Oxford. He drank heavily. He missed appointments. When he did see the queen, he was increasingly incoherent and evasive. That may have been his declining capacity, but you should know that Oxford had always been a master of intrigue. Remember Oxford going up the backstairs. His nickname was the “Backstairs Dragon” because he was so adept at using secret methods and access at court. Some politicians would listen to him and he’d make no sense, and they’d say, “That’s Oxford. He’s so smart—he’s trying to be all things to all men.”

The queen would have none of this. Oxford’s diminished capacity and Anne’s increased self-possession are demonstrated in an incident from the fall of 1713. Anne had promised the office of Treasurer of the Chamber to John West, Lord Delaware. There’s some evidence to believe that Oxford wanted to give the place to someone else. Giving offices is one of the ways you hang onto people’s loyalty. Maybe he was just losing it by this time. In any case, Oxford submitted to the queen a blank warrant—that is, a warrant that was all made out except for the name of the recipient of the office. This is like a blank check.

Anne’s reaction, as conveyed in a letter dated 21 October, reveals in no uncertain terms that she was not to be trifled with:

I was very much surprised to find by your letter that though I had told you the last time you were here I intended to give the Treasurer of the Chamber to Lord Delaware, you will bring me a warrant in blank. I desire you would not have so ill an opinion of me as to think when I have determined anything in my mind I will alter it. I have told Lord Delaware I will give him this office, and he has kissed my hand upon it. Therefore, when you come hither, bring the warrant with his name.

Whatever happened to that fraidy-cat that Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough liked to describe? Clearly by the end of her life, Queen Anne had learned to use the language of her birth and the prerogative of her position to get what she wanted.

Imagine her reaction when, in the summer of 1714, she discovers Oxford's double game with the Elector and the Pretender. You should know that she's been writing to the Elector saying, "I'm a Hanoverian, you have nothing to worry about. Leave me alone." After an emotional meeting on 27 July at Kensington Palace, Anne demanded Oxford's resignation as Lord Treasurer. The way you are appointed Lord Treasurer is that you are handed a staff. There's no warrant or place where your name is written down. Anne demanded the staff.

That night, the queen was overheard through the bedchamber door to be weeping. What was she crying about? I've always wondered. Maybe she was weeping over her lost friendship with Oxford. He's the last one of a circle of friends with which she began the reign. Maybe she was weeping for the end of her dreams of moderation and thus for royal initiative. You see, Oxford was the last politician who had any hope of maintaining that balance between Whigs and Tories. With Oxford gone, Anne is going to have to choose one party or the other. With Oxford gone, she's going to have to be a completely constitutional monarch and either let the Whigs run the show or let the Tories run the show.

In fact, as fate would have it, she never had to make the decision. On the morning of 30 July, she apparently suffered a stroke while standing in the long gallery at Kensington. You can go, and you yourself can stand at the mantle where Anne stood. Desperately ill, she began to sink into a coma. The queen's ladies of the bedchamber, the Duchesses of Somerset and Ormond (one Whig and one Tory), immediately spread the word. They tell their husbands, "Get here now. Get to the palace."

Hanoverian Whigs, Hanoverian Tories, and Jacobite Tories all flock to Kensington. In a sense, the entire reign, the future of the Revolution Settlement, the fate of Europe, and this entire lecture course comes down to what would happen now at Kensington. Who would seize power? Who would be Anne's new Lord Treasurer? Who would he proclaim as the next King of England?

That afternoon, the queen's privy councilors met at Kensington and they advised her to name as her new Lord Treasurer the Duke of Shrewsbury.



Shrewsbury was a consensus candidate. He was a Whig, but he'd stayed on in the Oxford ministry. He was well thought of by the Tories. He was one of the "immortal seven" who'd invited William of Orange to invade in 1688. You may remember his name. In other words, his revolutionary credentials were impeccable, which of course meant the Hanoverian succession.

Remember, there are Jacobite peers at the meeting. There's no record that any one of them piped up and said, "Well, what about James?" It would, of course, have been treason to do so, but here was their chance and they lost their nerve.

Anne accepted the recommendation of the Privy Council and, her hand guided by one of her officials, she handed the shaft to Shrewsbury. According to one version, she did so with the words, "Use it for the good of my people." It's apocryphal. It's probable that she didn't say that. It's probable that she wasn't in shape to say it, but it's believable. Anne had always operated on that principle.

Anne's last act ensured the Hanoverian succession. Anne, by the Grace of God, Queen of Great Britain and Ireland, Defender of the Faith, and the last Stuart ruler of the British Isles, died at 7:45 a.m. on 1 August 1714. Georg Ludwig, Elector of Hanover, was duly proclaimed King George that afternoon. A new political world had dawned.

Or had it? A contemporary might have been forgiven for wondering if this really was such a great milestone. Once again, I'd like you to imagine a woman, maybe the great granddaughter of the woman I introduced you to in Lecture Twenty. She's born around 1630 under the government of King Charles I and the Anglican religious ascendancy. Imagine that she still lives in 1714, having grown to the ripe old age of 84. It was possible. Some people did.

As a child, she might have heard her parents and her grandparents (if hers were among the few living grandparents) talk about the Armada and the Gunpowder Plot and political and religious strife under Queen Elizabeth and King James. She would almost certainly have heard her parents complain about the hard economic times. In the 1640s, while she was a teenager, her

father and brothers might have gone off to fight the civil wars. At the end of the decade, she would have witnessed the disestablishment of the national Church and the execution of her king, Anne's grandfather.

In her 20s, during the 1650s, she would have been ruled by a series of unstable governments and exposed to a wide variety of weird political and religious ideas. In 1660, at the age of 30, maybe she went off to a Quaker meeting—you don't know. She would have seen the Restoration of the Stuart monarchy and the Church of England, but thereafter, during her middle age, heard of unsuccessful foreign wars, domestic plots, and increasing tension between king and Parliament over money and religion.

Then, in 1688, at the end of her 50s, she would have lived through a second revolution in Church and State. This would be followed by, in her old age, two decades of almost continuous warfare abroad and bitter party strife at home.

At the end of her life, she's to be ruled by a new foreign king. Had she been a betting woman, would she have wagered that he and his advisors could bring England peace, stability, and prosperity? In fact, had she taken that bet, she would have won, for that is precisely what King George I and his advisors managed to accomplish. That is the story of the next lecture.

# Hanoverian Epilogue: 1714–30

## Lecture 45

**The accession of the House of Hanover solved once and for all most of the problems that had wracked England under the Tudors and Stuarts. George I was content to govern through one party—the Whigs—and through one prime minister—Sir Robert Walpole. ... Walpolean stability provided political peace at home ... [making] Great Britain the richest and most powerful country in Europe during the 18<sup>th</sup> century.**

**T**he peaceful accession of the House of Hanover, combined with Britain's victory in the War of the Spanish Succession, confirmed the Revolution of 1688–1689 and, thus, solved or pacified most of the tensions that had wracked England under the Stuarts. Clearly, Great Britain was a constitutional monarchy in which Parliament was sovereign, because it had chosen the new king. The Crown (as opposed to the king personally) was very wealthy and controlled a vast administration, but it could tax only for purposes approved by Parliament. England was Anglican, with a toleration for Dissenting Protestants. Scotland remained Presbyterian, and Catholic Ireland was ruled by a Protestant minority. Great Britain was a world power with a role to play in Europe and an empire in North America. Ultimate power remained firmly in the hands of the landed elite in the countryside, though they acquired junior partners among urban professionals and merchants. A key element in confirming these solutions was the personality and political philosophy of George I (1714–1727).

Georg Ludwig was over 54 years old at his accession. He believed that only the Whigs could be trusted to defend the Hanoverian succession. At his accession, he abandoned Queen Anne's attempt to employ moderates of both parties in favor of a Whig ministry. The Tory party would be out of office for two generations. Many Tories, including Bolingbroke and Ormond, fled to the Pretender on the Continent. Scottish Tories attempted to mount a rebellion on his behalf in 1715, but, without help from a prostrate France, it was easily suppressed. This only confirmed George's view of the Tories.

Even before “the Fifteen” (as the rebellion was called), the Whigs won the first general election of the reign, guaranteeing supremacy in the House of Commons. George obligingly gave them a majority in the Lords by creating new Whig peers. The Whig majority rushed through the Septennial Act in 1716. This superseded the Triennial Act by decreeing that elections were to be held only every seven years. This gave the Whigs time to cement their hold on government and develop their organization in the countryside. It also meant that elections, now rarer, would be more expensive to contest, because the term of service was longer. This froze out minor—read Tory—gentry in favor of bigger landowners and moneyed men—read Whigs. England became, if not a one-party state, one that was dominated by one party.

All of this begs the question of which Whigs the king would entrust with government. The Junto’s generation of Whig leaders was dead or dying by 1714–1716. At first, the youngest member of the Junto, Charles Spencer, Earl of Sunderland, formed a government with younger Whigs, such as James Stanhope, Robert Walpole, and Charles, Viscount Townshend. But the ambitious Walpole and Townshend split from their colleagues in 1717.

The Stanhope-Sunderland ministry fell in 1720 as a result of a financial scandal known as the South Sea Bubble. The South Sea Company had agreed to take over three-fifths of the government debt in return for the right to sell unlimited amounts of stock. Company stock skyrocketed in the late summer of 1720, until it became obvious that the company had done no actual south seas trading. The resultant collapse ruined many. The government fell because many of its officials had taken bribes to approve the plan.

The king turned to Walpole to clean up the mess, naming him Paymaster of the Forces in 1720, then First Lord of the Treasury in 1721. Robert Walpole (knighted in 1725) was a Norfolk country gentleman who had served as secretary at war under Queen Anne. Because George I spoke little English and took little active part in government, Walpole would be the first real prime minister in British history, retaining that position for more than 20 years, still a record. How did he do it?

Opponents charged that Walpole maintained his power through patronage and bribery. The king put at his disposal the vast resources of the British government, comprising some 12,000 positions at the center, plus posts in the army and navy, Church livings, and pensions and other favors from the Treasury. Walpole offered these to members of Parliament, their constituents in the countryside, friends, and relatives. Tory writers (such as Jonathan Swift) and some “country” Whigs accused him of corrupting the political nation. But, in fact, Walpole was never able to “bribe” more than about half of the House of Lords or one-third of the House of Commons with offices and pensions. Admittedly, this group was so loyal that they became known as the “Old Corps.”

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To maintain parliamentary majorities, the prime minister had to persuade most members that he was right on the issues. He did this by embracing the majority position on those issues. On the succession, most of the political nation was happy with the Hanoverians. In fact, the Jacobite movement was incompetent and impotent without the power of France. Nevertheless, Walpole’s spy system routinely uncovered new Jacobite “plots.” By playing on fears that the Jacobites remained a serious threat, Walpole reinforced the positions that the Tories could not be trusted and that only Walpole could save the Hanoverian succession and English constitution.

On religion, most people in England were Anglicans. Dissenters amounted to about 6 percent of the population; Catholics, Jews, and others were less than 1 percent. Walpole, though a Whig, backed away from attempts to expand the toleration by repealing the Test Act. Instead, he promoted the Church of England at every opportunity, winning the support of the bishops and the parish clergy. The Dissenters remained Whigs, because they were a captive constituency, offered no hope by the Tories. On the issues of foreign policy and finance, Walpole opted for peace and low taxes. As secretary at war under Queen Anne, he had seen the destructive nature of war. As a result, he became

a lifelong pacifist. Knowing that France was exhausted after the wars of Louis XIV, he maintained cordial relations with Britain's great rival. This allowed him to lower the land tax, thus cementing his popularity with the landed elite. On most of these issues (religion, foreign policy, finance), Walpole had embraced the Tory position. This removed those issues from the Tory arsenal and rendered Walpole impregnable in Parliament and in the country for two decades.

Finally, Walpole was a masterful politician. Knowing that the Commons was now the more important of the two houses, he was careful to refuse a peerage until after his retirement from politics. Before sessions, he organized meetings of the Old Corps to plan strategy. His government sought to enhance its control and limit popular participation by using the courts to *reduce* the size of the electorate. If all else failed, he was a masterful debater with a flair for the cutting remark and the theatrical gesture.

Walpole's system was anything but democratic, but it was so efficient that when George I was succeeded by George II in 1727, he continued Walpole as prime minister in spite of his personal animosity. In short, Great Britain was now truly a constitutional monarchy: The king had to choose the minister who could work with Parliament, regardless of his personal feelings. Walpole and the Whigs maintained political stability in England for most of two generations. Signs of instability began to be apparent as early as the 1730s, but that is a matter for another course. In the meantime, relative political peace at home combined with military and naval dominance abroad and the commercial boom fostered after Utrecht to make England prosperous as never before. ■

### Suggested Reading

Bucholz and Key, *Early Modern England*, Conclusion, sec. 1.

Hoppit, *Land of Liberty?* chap. 12.

Plumb, *Growth of Political Stability*.

## Questions to Consider

1. How real was the Jacobite menace? In rejecting the entire Tory party, did the first two Georges harm their own interests?
2. What is political stability? Does it mean that everyone is happy? Does it imply or require social stability?

## Hanoverian Epilogue: 1714–30

### Lecture 45—Transcript

In the last lecture, victory in the War of the Spanish Succession and the Treaty of Utrecht brought Great Britain an expanded overseas empire and the potential for immense wealth. Soon after, the death of Queen Anne brought the kingdom a new ruling house. Would this new beginning take, or would the instability and rancor that had plagued the Stuarts persist under the Hanoverians?

In fact, the victory in the War of the Spanish Succession and the accession of the House of Hanover solved once and for all most of the problems that had wracked England under the Tudors and Stuarts. George I was content to govern through one party—the Whigs—and through one prime minister—Sir Robert Walpole. Walpole governed by embracing the most popular positions on the issues of the succession, religion, and war and peace, irrespective of the party origins, as well as by liberal exploitation of the vast field of government patronage at his disposal.

The resultant Walpolean stability provided political peace at home, allowing the legacy of the Peace of Utrecht, the British Empire, British trade, and British military and naval might to make Great Britain the richest and most powerful country in Europe during the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

The peaceful accession of the House of Hanover, combined with Britain's victory in the War of the Spanish Succession, solved or pacified most of the tensions that had wracked England politically under the Stuarts. It did this by confirming once and for all the solutions that had been worked out during the Revolution of 1688–1689. Clearly, in the area of sovereignty, Great Britain was a constitutional monarchy in which Parliament was sovereign. It had just chosen the new king.

In finance, the Crown, as opposed to the king personally, was now very wealthy and controlled a vast administration, but it could only tax for purposes approved by Parliament. In religion, England remained Anglican with a toleration for Dissenting Protestants. Scotland remained Presbyterian, and Catholic Ireland was ruled by a Protestant minority.



Turning to foreign policy, thanks to Marlborough's victories and the territorial arrangements of Utrecht, Great Britain was a world power. It would play a major role in Europe. In fact, since the new king would continue to rule as Elector of Hanover, Britain is going to be even more involved in Europe than before. In addition, it had acquired an empire in North America.

Ultimate power, in terms of central versus local control, remained firmly in the hands of the landed elite in the countryside, but they'd acquired junior partners among the professionals and the merchants who'd helped to finance the war. Moreover, as we'll see in this lecture, the Hanoverians would find ways to make the locals want to cooperate.

The settlement of these five issues would enable our old woman mentioned at the end of the last lecture to live out her final days in peace and relative prosperity.

A key element in confirming all these solutions was the personality and political philosophy of the new king, George I, who reigned from 1714–1727. Georg Ludwig was over 54 years old at his accession. He'd studied English politics, and he'd come to the following conclusion: Only Whigs could be trusted to defend the Hanoverian succession. Remember, the Tories included many secret (and some not so secret) Jacobites. Remember, Oxford's largely Tory ministry had worked out a separate peace with France that had served Britain's interests, not Hanover's. Hanover was one of those allies that had been left in the lurch by Oxford.

Since the Pretender still lived, and Jacobites still fought for his restoration, King George further concluded that only Whigs could be trusted with government office. Upon his arrival in England, he pointedly snubbed the Earl of Oxford and other Tory dignitaries who met him on his entry to London, according to Lord Bolingbroke, "with a most distinguishing contempt."

Thereafter, he abandoned Queen Anne's idea of employing moderates of both parties. Rather, he purged Tories from office and began to appoint Whigs. The Tory party would be out of office for two generations. Oxford

and the negotiators for the Treaty of Utrecht were impeached. Other Tories, including Bolingbroke and Ormond, fled to the Pretender on the continent.

In the fall of 1715, Scottish Tories mounted a rebellion on the Pretender's behalf, but a prostrate France could offer little help and English Jacobites did nothing. As we'll see, they're very good at that. "The Fifteen" was put down easily by the following spring.

That event only convinced George that he was right about the Tories, of course. In response, a Whig Parliament passed the Riot Act, which made it a hanging offense for 12 or more people to remain assembled when ordered to be dispersed by local authorities.

Even before "the Fifteen," the Whigs had won the first general election of the new reign, which meant, of course, supremacy in the House of Commons. George obligingly gave them a majority in the Lords by creating new Whig peers to counterbalance the ones that Anne had created to secure the peace.

Using this parliamentary majority, the Whigs rushed through the Septennial Act in 1716. That act superseded the Triennial Act by decreeing that elections were to take place only every seven years. Do you remember when the Whigs used to be the party of almost democracy—the people and all of that? The Septennial Act gave the Whigs seven years to cement their hold on power and to develop their organization in the countryside.

It also meant that elections would now be rarer and therefore, each election was like a diamond: It was worth a lot more. People are going to spend a lot more on the contest. The term was longer too, so you were getting more.

In 1689, the successful candidate for the seat at Harrage spent just £8 on 32 voters, but in 1727, the winner had to spend £900. The increased costs of elections played to the strengths of bigger landowners and moneyed men (the people who'd made all the money off of the war). Who would that be? That would be Whigs. This froze out minor—read Tory—gentry who couldn't afford these kinds of expenditures. Because the Whigs had the deep pockets, they secured unassailable majorities in election after election well

into the 18<sup>th</sup> century. As a result, constitutional monarchs would have to employ Whig ministries.

That was fine with George I and his son, George II, who reigned from 1727–1760, for all the reasons I noted above: They were Hanoverians. They were born and grew up in Hanover. They’ve noticed that Tories are unreliable, but that Whigs aren’t. So long as the Jacobite Pretender to the throne lived (“James III,” as his followers called him, would live until 1766) and so long as the Jacobite menace persisted, Hanoverian kings would favor Whigs. The Tories would be exiled to the political wilderness.

I want to be careful here. Tories would remain an important minority party in Parliament. You couldn’t discount them. They could cause a lot of trouble. They would fight, often successfully, for a place at the table of local government. That is, there would still be plenty of Tory sheriffs and JPs. At the center, however, Great Britain was to all intents and purposes a one-party state. Whigs dominated the political world until about 1760.

But which Whigs? Which set of Whigs would the king entrust with government? That question was complicated by the fact that Whig leadership was experiencing what historians call “generational change,” which is a fancy way of saying that people were dying off and being replaced by younger people. Put simply, the leaders who’d risen to power under William and Anne were dying off. Godolphin had died in 1712 before the queen. Marlborough’s health was failing. The obvious candidates to lead were the members of the Junto, but by the end of 1716, Wharton, Somers, and Montagu had all died and Orford retired. You remember all that wild living. Remember that Wharton and Somers were rakes; maybe it caught up with them.

Within two years of George’s accession, the remaining member of the Junto, Charles Spencer, Earl of Sunderland, joined with a new generation of younger Whigs, such as James Stanhope, Robert Walpole, and Charles, Viscount Townshend to form a government. That government had a number of foreign policy successes. Stanhope was strong on foreign policy. He was an old military man. He fought in Spain. Their major one was the

establishment of a quadruple alliance with France (that's right, Britain and France allied), the Netherlands, and Austria to maintain the peace.

The ambitious Walpole and Townshend disliked these foreign entanglements and split from their colleagues in 1717 in what came to be known as the "Whig schism." Without them, the Stanhope-Sunderland administration carried on until 1720. In that year, it fell as a result of a financial scandal known as the South Sea Bubble.

Recall that the British government had contracted a huge amount of debt to win the Nine Years' War and the War of the Spanish Succession, namely about £40 million. The annual interest on that debt ran at about £2.5 million. At the beginning of 1720, the South Sea Company agreed to take over three-fifths of the debt in return for the right to sell unlimited amounts of its stock. Specifically, holders of government annuities would convert them into company stock. The government would no longer have any obligation to them. The company stock looked lucrative, because everyone expected huge profits from the South Seas trade—that is, the Spanish trade.

Company stock skyrocketed all through the summer of 1720. Stock that had been worth £100 in January was now selling at £1500 by August, but by the late summer of 1720, it became obvious that there was just one little flaw in the system: The South Sea Company had done no trading. Therefore, the stock was worthless. The resultant collapse ruined hundreds of paper fortunes. The government fell when it was revealed that many of its officials had taken bribes to approve the plan. Some committed suicide. Stanhope died from a burst blood vessel while trying to defend himself in the House of Commons. Sunderland retreated into a safe court post in the king's bedchamber.

The economic significance of the South Sea Bubble was that it showed just how wild, unregulated, and uncertain was this new rather baffling world of stocks and credit. Most people were shocked, as so many of us, I suppose, were in the '90s after the dot-com collapse, to discover that paper profits really could go away so quickly.

The political significance of all this was that it brought to power a new ministry. The king turned to Robert Walpole to clean up the mess. He was just about the only person who had said, “There’s something wrong with this.” The king named him Paymaster of the Forces in 1720 and then First Lord of the Treasury in 1721.

Sir Robert Walpole (he was knighted in 1725) was a Norfolk country gentleman who’d served as secretary at war under Queen Anne. He’s generally considered to have been the first true prime minister in British history. What does that mean? Prior to 1714, individual ministers served at the behest of the sovereign, of course. He was expected to determine policy and set the tone for his administration, not any individual minister. Despite the obvious *de facto* primacy of the Lord Treasurer, all ministers were theoretically equals. They owed their jobs and their loyalty to the king, not to each other. Thus, monarchs like William or Anne could mix and match ministers of different parties.

As we’ve seen, King George didn’t want to mix and match, nor did he desire very much to lead. Remember, George is 54 years old at his accession. In those days, that’s getting on a bit. Moreover, he spoke very little English. He was, in fact, far more interested in the affairs of his ancestral state of Hanover, where he often summered, than he was in England.

As a result, George I would delegate the leadership of his government, including nearly all decisions about policy and patronage, to Sir Robert Walpole. That’s why Walpole would be the first real prime minister—clearly, a first among unequals in British history. He would retain that position for 22 years, which is still a record. In the course of those 22 years, he would give Britain its first taste of political stability since at least the Tudors. How did he do it?

Opponents charged that Walpole maintained his power like Danby had done: through patronage and bribery. To a great extent, this was true. The king put at his disposal the vast resources of the British government. Remember, those resources had grown vaster thanks to the wars. There were some 12,000 positions at the center, including about 1,000 in the royal household (none of those places required a great deal of expertise); 5,000 places in the

revenue services (the Treasury, Exchequer, Customs, and Excise); plus the post office; the ordinance; the foreign service; posts in the army and navy; Church livings; positions in local government (these were unpaid, but they carried a lot of prestige); and pensions and other favors from the Treasury.

Walpole called these goodies “grass for the beasts.” He offered pasture not merely to parliamentary beasts, but to their constituents in the countryside as well as to their friends and relatives. For example, if an MP voted as Sir Robert bid, then he might land a good government job, or find one for a brother, or obtain a Church living for a younger son, or promote a nephew in the army, or be able to do things for friends and clients in his home constituency. That made him a more important man. The tentacles of the Walpolean system extended into every elite household in the country.

Note how the creation of big government to fight the wars leads to increased power for the Crown and closer connections with the local ruling elite. This is really the solution to the problem of local government. You make people want the goodies that the center has to distribute. Note that this also comes with a decrease in political freedom. You’ve got to vote the way Walpole wants you to do. That’s just what Swift predicted when he complained about the moneyed men.

Conversely, if our MP decides to vote his conscience against Walpole’s government, he might lose office. He might be powerless to assist family and friends. He would be universally known to be out of the loop at the center and at home.

As a consequence of this use of patronage, the prime minister could always rely on a corps of about 75 peers in the House of Lords and 150 MPs in the House of Commons. They proved so reliable that they earned the nickname the “Old Corps.” Their votes were in his pocket.

Walpole was excoriated by Tory writers and some dissident “country” Whigs, who saw him as deluding the king, debauching Parliament, and corrupting the political nation by offering a devil’s bargain: riches and stability for votes. He was satirized as the unscrupulous toady Flimnap in Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels* (Book 1); as Palinurus, “Who teaches kings to

fiddle and makes senators dance,” in Pope’s *The Dunciad*; and as the corrupt jailor Peachum, who acts as a fence for goods stolen by his band of loyal thieves in Le Gay’s *The Beggar’s Opera*. Periodicals like *The Craftsman* and *Mist’s Weekly Journal* attacked him on a weekly basis. Here he acquired a series of unflattering nicknames: Bob Booty, the Great Man, and the Bribemaster-General.

Indeed, Walpole became the poster boy for opportunism, deceit, and unscrupulous political behavior, accused of setting a low moral tone and rotting the very moral fiber of the nation, similar to the way that some Republican critics portrayed the administration of President Clinton in the 1990s. Walpole tried to silence his critics. He pursued charges of seditious libel against them. He sponsored a new Licensing Act in 1737. This required all publications to be approved by a government censor. He employed his own stable of writers, and he bought London’s only daily newspaper, *The Daily Courant*. All the best writers, however, still worked for the opposition.

Still, despite their best efforts, the prime minister was impervious to their charges for over 20 years. As with President Clinton in the 1990s, he seemed to be giving the country what it wanted, so they were willing to look the other way. You’ve got to remember something about this. Walpole was never able to “bribe” more than about half of the House of Lords or one-third of the House of Commons with offices and pensions. Those numbers are by no means the whole or even half of those two bodies. That means that to maintain parliamentary majorities for 22 years, he must have been doing something to please the many independent MPs and constituents who were not in his pocket.

That is to say, to maintain parliamentary majorities for over two decades, the prime minister had to persuade most members—and therefore most of the ruling class—that he was right on the issues. He did this by embracing the majority position on each of those issues. Like a modern politician who watches the polls, Walpole almost always guessed right. There’s some evidence that these would have been his positions in any case. For whatever reason, Walpole’s positions and policies reflected the hopes, fears, and prejudices of the political nation on the three great issues of the day leftover from Queen Anne.

Take the succession: First, Walpole was, like most of the political nation, a Hanoverian. It's true that the great mass of the English people never really warmed to George. George was standoffish. He didn't want to go outside of the palace. He wanted to be left alone. The vast majority of the ruling elite were happy Hanoverians. The last thing they wanted was to turn the clock back to pre-1688, when Parliament had less power and when all of those funds and lotteries they'd invested in would be repudiated. Walpole did everything he could to prevent that.

In fact, the Jacobite movement, which wanted a restoration of the Stuarts, was wildly romantic, thoroughly incompetent, and ultimately impotent without the power of France backing it. For example, most English Jacobites wrote great letters to "James III" pledging loyalty unto death, but remember they did nothing when they had their chance in "the Fifteen." The movement was also thoroughly infiltrated by Walpole. He had an extensive spy system, and he opened all the mail. Routinely, he would uncover some new Jacobite "plot." Now historians realize that about half of these were either manufactured by Walpole or at the very least, he was building huge conspiracies on the basis of a couple of letters. There's a famous example of one involving a dog. The dog was somehow going to start a plot.

It was, of course, in Walpole's interest to continually remind the king and the nation that the Jacobites remained a serious threat, that all Tories were really Jacobites, that no Tory could therefore be trusted, and that Robert Walpole was their chief nemesis, an arch Whig, and therefore the vital defender of the Hanoverian succession and the English constitution. Walpole was the indispensable man. Where before I drew a parallel with Bill Clinton, now Walpole becomes Joe McCarthy, the hammer of a secret society trying to overthrow the Hanoverian government.

Turning to religion, most people in England were Anglicans. They had come to accept the legal toleration of Dissenters, but they had no wish to see that toleration extended. There were maybe 340,000 Dissenters, amounting to about six percent of the population. Remember that they were still officially prohibited from serving in government by the Test and Corporation Acts, but the Whigs did repeal the Occasional Conformity Act of 1711 in 1719, which



means that Dissenters could go back to taking communion once a year and so qualify.

Catholics, Jews, and others amounted to less than one percent of the population. Walpole looked at the numbers, and he drew certain conclusions. Though a Whig, he backed away from any attempt to expand the toleration by repealing the Test Act. This is something that Whigs had talked about doing for years. Walpole says we don't have to do that. Instead, he promoted the Church of England at every opportunity. That won him the support of the bishops, who, of course, sit in the House of Lords. It also won him the ringing endorsements of all those Anglican clergy in the pulpits all throughout the land who are constantly saying what a great guy Walpole is and how well he serves the king.

The Dissenters stayed Whig. They're a captive constituency. The Tories hate them. They won't get anything from the Tories. It would profit them nothing from leaving the Whig party, so Walpole has his cake and eats it too. Notice that in so doing, he's taken from the Tories one of their great issues. Walpole and the Whigs are now the defenders of the Church. This was always a big Tory issue. Now Walpole has the Church and the succession.

What about the third issue: war and peace and finance? On the issues of war, foreign policy, and money, Walpole again chooses the Tory position: peace and low taxes. Some of this has to do with personal proclivities (most historians would agree). Walpole had been secretary at war under Queen Anne, and he had seen the bodies coming back. He knew the destructive nature of war. Walpole was a committed, lifelong pacifist.

He also knew that France was exhausted after the wars of Louis XIV. He knew that Louis XV's minority would be long and therefore France was no threat. He maintained cordial relations with Britain's great rival. Knowing that Utrecht had secured British commercial and military supremacy for a generation, Walpole wanted to take advantage of the peace dividend by paying down the national debt and lowering taxes. Under Walpole, the land tax fell gradually to one shilling in the pound. It had been four shillings in the pound. This cemented his popularity with the landed elite, and it took away another Tory issue.

By the way, you notice that when you take away all the issues, you become the issue. That's why the only thing the Tories could do was complain about Bob Booty and the Bribemaster-General and how corrupt he is. They had nothing else. On most of these great issues, Walpole has embraced the Tory position, removing those issues from the Tory arsenal and rendering Sir Robert impregnable in Parliament and in the country for over 20 years.

Along with decreasing frequency of elections, this lowered the political temperature. We're only going to the country every seven years now, so things are calmer. Walpole's government also did what it could to limit popular participation in democracy. Remember, I told you that whenever there used to be an election under Queen Anne, the winning party would expand the voting rolls? Walpole's administration starts contracting them. Why? The fewer people who have a say, the fewer people he has to please. Walpole gave the country political stability by *reducing* democracy. This appeared to be what the ruling elite wanted.

Finally, Sir Robert Walpole was a masterful politician. Knowing that the Commons was now the more important of the two houses, he was careful to always remain merely Sir Robert. He refused a peerage several times because he wanted to stay in the Commons. Before sessions, he would organize meetings of the Old Corps to plan strategy and ensure that there were no surprises.

If all else failed, Sir Robert was a great debater with a flair for the cutting remark and the theatrical gesture. One of my favorites is if he was being attacked in Parliament—somebody was standing in the House of Commons and saying what an awful guy Walpole was and how his positions were terrible—Walpole would pull from his vest a Norfolk apple, which he'd grown on his own estates. He would start munching it loudly. This of course had several effects. It often disturbed the speaker. It showed Walpole's disdain for his attacker, and it reminded all those back bench country gentlemen that he was really at heart one of them. He might be the king's minister, "But I'm just a country boy at heart, eating my apple, and I understand your problems. I feel your pain."

Walpole's system was corrupt and anything but democratic, but it gave England relative political peace for the first time in centuries—maybe this entire course. It was so efficient that when George I died and was succeeded by George II in 1727, he continued Sir Robert as his prime minister, despite the fact that he didn't really like Walpole.

In short, Great Britain truly was now a constitutional monarchy. Having given themselves over so completely to the Whigs and having abandoned William's and Anne's attempt to maintain moderate ministries and so freedom of maneuver, George II had no choice. He had to choose the minister who could work with Parliament regardless of his personal feelings. In fact, this proved to be not such a bad deal for the new George. Walpole and the Whigs maintained political stability in England for most of two generations. They gave George II full Treasuries, cooperative Parliaments, and an opposition in disarray.

It is true that there were signs of instability beginning in the 1730s. A new generation of politicians emerged then. They're a new generation. They hadn't seen the War of the Spanish Succession. They rejected Walpole's corruption and pacifism. Under William Pitt, these patriots secured war with Spain in 1739 and entry into the War of the Austrian Succession in 1742. Later that year saw Walpole's fall when he proved to be an ineffective war minister. The constitutional king who wanted to retain Walpole had to let him go because Parliament had rejected him. Who's sovereign now? It's Parliament. Walpole's methods, as well as the Old Corps, would remain intact for later Whig ministers to use, but that is a matter for another lecture course.

In the meantime, relative political peace at home combined with military and naval dominance abroad and the commercial boom fostered after Utrecht to make England prosperous as never before. See next lecture. In this lecture, three and a half centuries of dynastic and political instability came to an end. Thanks to the political prejudices and disengagement of George I, the triumph of the Whig party, and the policies of Sir Robert Walpole, English politics appeared to finally have solved the problems of sovereignty and succession, finance, religion, war and foreign policy, central versus local control, and settled down into a fight over spoils.

This was not exactly, of course, the end of history. The Jacobites would make one more last ditch attempt at the throne in 1745. The son of the Pretender, Bonnie Prince Charlie, who came to be known as the “Young Pretender,” would land in Scotland with a few followers and raise the Stuart standard. This is all part of the War of the Austrian Succession, so he would receive some French support. He would attract Highland clan leaders, who resented the union and London’s control. They would capture Edinburgh and for a few weeks, a Catholic Stuart would rule once again in Scotland.

But “the Forty-Five” received no support in England. Scottish tenant farmers would prove to be no match for British redcoats under George II’s son, the Duke of Cumberland, at the battle of Culloden. Subsequently, Parliament and Cumberland would ban the wearing of the tartan and suppress the clans, respectively. This would be the last serious challenge for the British throne in its history. By the way, Bonnie Prince Charlie would live on for many more years and dine out on these experiences. The last Stuart claimant, his younger brother, Cardinal Henry York, would die in 1806 and will the the Jacobite regalia to King George III.

Other issues would persist, arise, or transform. There would be the national debt, the question of toleration for Dissenters and Catholics, war for trade and empire with France and Spain, and the distribution of parliamentary representation, but Britain’s form of government, state religion, and constitutional arrangements were beyond argument. The major political issues raised in this course had been settled. What about society and culture? The Commercial, Financial, and Glorious Revolutions were working another, quieter transformation of British society and culture. It is to that revolution that we turn next.

# The Land and Its People in 1714—Part I

## Lecture 46

**In a way, their problem is one faced by all historians: Is history the story of how things were—the actual or even the vestigial—or is it the story of what was new and coming—the incipient or the potential?**

**H**istorians argue about the nature of the period 1660–1730. Some stress the degree to which English society remained an *ancien régime*, unaffected by the first stirrings of the Enlightenment. England was still a monarchy, with a hierarchical social structure based more on birth than wealth. It retained a state church. Its economy was still heavily agricultural; its society, rural. Others argue that England was well on the way to Enlightenment, democracy, and the Industrial Revolution. After 1688–1689, the monarchy was a constitutional one, ultimately subordinate to Parliament. The social structure of England was the most fluid in Europe, with wealth and achievement beginning to dislodge birth as criteria for admission into its highest ranks. Other religious traditions were increasingly tolerated, both in fact and in law. More and more people were moving to the cities and getting their bread by trade and industry.

The key to many of these changes was that population growth slowed down, even reversed itself. After 1660, the population of England and Wales fell from 5.5 million in 1661 to 5.2 million in 1686, then rose slowly, to 5.4 million in 1701, then to 5.7 million in 1721. This did not happen because of famine: By 1710, England was a net exporter of grain, although famine remained a real threat in Scotland and Ireland. Rather, between 1660 and 1730, epidemic disease continued to attack the population. As a result, average life expectancy dipped to 30 by 1680. People married later, on average around 27 or 28, thus producing fewer children. Perhaps half a million people emigrated to the American colonies. This demographic slowdown affected the economy. As the number of agricultural workers fell, rents fell, prices fell, and wages rose. This situation affected different groups differently. Husbandmen, cottagers, even the poor prospered, relatively speaking. Big landowners were sufficiently diversified to survive and even

prosper. They did well out of office-holding. They invested in government funds, trading companies, and turnpikes. They exploited their mineral rights. But middling and smaller landowners—minor gentry and yeomen—got clobbered. They were forced to pay higher wages to their workers and to make do with lower rents from their tenants. They were already paying high land taxes for the wars. Many lost their lands and fell into the ranks of husbandmen or cottagers. They embraced Tory charges that Whig governments and moneyed men were draining the land to fund wars.

Trade boomed during the period 1660–1730, expanding in total gross value from £7.9 million in 1663–1669 to £14.5 million in 1721–1724. Wool exports mattered less and less. English trade was led by the import to English territories and re-export to Europe of Caribbean sugar, followed by American tobacco and Indian silks, dyes, and spices. Underpinning it all was the slave trade and the murderous exploitation of Africans in the New World. Thanks to the Navigation Acts, the possessions and trading rights added at Utrecht, and the enforcement capabilities of the royal navy, British merchants monopolized these trades. British ports, especially London, grew rich off their profits; American colonial economies also prospered.

English industry benefited from the investment of trading profits, but it was still small scale. The largest industries were shipbuilding on the coasts; coal mining in Durham and the Midlands, along with tin mining in Cornwall; and metal work in the Midlands and North.

Finally, this economy benefited from an increasingly sophisticated network of transportation, communication, and credit. Rivers were dredged and turnpikes were established. Banks, offering cheap loans at less than 6 percent, proliferated in London and, later, in the countryside. Stock “jobbers” operated informal stock exchanges at London coffee houses, such as Jonathan’s. Merchants obtained shipping news at Lloyd’s. Regular stage services and newspapers linked London with the countryside.

As we have seen, the benefits of this economy were not shared evenly. Despite the reduced profitability of land, this was a golden age for the landed nobility and the substantial gentry. These ranks still made up about 2 percent

of the population, yet they owned more than half of the land in England. Still, their wealth varied. The greatest peers made perhaps £20,000–40,000 a year; middling peers and greater gentry, several thousands; and the lesser gentry, as little as £200 a year. The wealthiest aristocrats poured their fortunes into the building of great country houses, situated amid vast deer parks and formal gardens, filled with magnificent furniture and paintings. Their proprietors nevertheless spent half the year in London, attending to government and sampling the pleasures of “the season.” Finally, they might spend a month at a spa, such as Bath, Epsom, or Tunbridge Wells, or go to race meetings at Epsom or Newmarket.

Lesser gentry lived in smaller but still comfortable houses, served as JPs, and stayed closer to their estates. After 1660, they might venture to county towns, which began to imitate London by providing assemblies, dances, even plays. They were joined by the prosperous middling orders, merchants and professionals. This group spurred many of the changes in later Stuart England. Though they might respect and ape their “betters,” they had a growing sense that they were every bit as “gentle” and important to the nation.

The greatest overseas merchants rivaled the nobility in wealth. Their families might rise to or marry into it. Professionals (lawyers, doctors, clergymen, government officials, and military and naval officers) also prospered generally, though their wealth varied from several thousand pounds a year for a successful

attorney to just a few pounds a year for a poor parish priest. These groups saw increasing professionalism, with stricter educational requirements, licensing organizations, and so on. Many chose not to buy landed estates but to live in town. This helps to explain why, by 1714, some 20–25 percent of the population was urban. Craftsmen and smaller tradesmen continued to live modest lives above their shops or on the roads peddling their wares. The decline of guilds gave them more freedom but less security.

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**Yeomen might make as much as £250 a year, but they were being squeezed by high taxes, high labor costs, and low rents and food prices.**

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Ordinary people, some 90 percent of the population, did relatively well during this period. Yeomen might make as much as £250 a year, but they were being squeezed by high taxes, high labor costs, and low rents and food prices. Many fell into the lower ranks. These conditions benefited husbandmen and cottagers, but they still made only £6–40 a year. The vast majority of their income was spent on food. A few bad years, or even the seasonal unemployment associated with subsistence agriculture, might drive members of this group down into the ranks of the poor, vagrants, and criminals.

Lacking a large standing army or police force, the elite sought to control the lower orders by other means. Religious leaders of all persuasions launched a campaign for “the reformation of manners.” But church attendance declined in the 18th century, in part because the Toleration Act eliminated penalties for non-attendance and in part because religious “enthusiasm” got a bad name after the sectarian strife of the previous century.

The Poor Law still supplemented the incomes of about 4–5 percent of the general population. In response to a perceived rise in crime, the criminal code became harsher, the number of capital crimes rising from 50 in 1688 to more than 200 by 1820. Only a small proportion of accused offenders were ever hanged. Some were transported to the American colonies. The legal system worked mostly by threat and intimidation, not by actual cruelty, but the lower orders threatened right back through crime and through controlled riot, which appealed for justice to the upper classes yet also threatened them with physical violence if justice was denied. In short, this increasingly affluent society was still gripped by wild disparities in wealth and the ever-present threat that the have-nots would rise up against the haves. ■

### Suggested Reading

Bucholz and Key, *Early Modern England*, conclusion.

Hoppit, *Land of Liberty?* chaps. 3, 8, 10–11, 14.



## Questions to Consider

1. In your view, was England still an *ancien régime* in 1714, or was it the first modern country?
2. Did England achieve social stability in the 18th century? How does the political stability described in the last lecture relate to this question?

# The Land and Its People in 1714—Part I

## Lecture 46—Transcript

In the last lecture, we saw how, following Queen Anne's death in 1714 and accession of the Hanoverians, England achieved the political stability and peace that had eluded it for so long. This lecture turns to the English economy and society at the end of the Stuart period—that is, since the last time we examined them in Lectures Twenty to Twenty-Seven. We're going to catch you up on what's been happening since about 1660.

As you may have gathered from the political narrative, the news for the English people was mostly pretty good. As the population growth slowed down and the economy, buoyed by the Commercial and Financial Revolutions, picked up steam, the general standard of living rose. This enabled the wealthy to build great palaces at their country seats, as well as enjoy the pleasures of a booming entertainment industry in London. At the same time, other cities grew, enabling the middling orders to replicate a similar lifestyle in places like Norwich, York, and Bath. Even the great mass of the laboring poor was doing better. As this course comes to a close, the country still had not solved the problems of poverty and crime.

Historians have had a difficult time pinning down England in the period 1660–1714 and beyond. In a way, their problem is one faced by all historians: Is history the story of how things were—the actual or even the vestigial—or is it the story of what was new and coming—the incipient or the potential? Is it a story of firsts—the first time something was done—or is it the story of what things were actually like for most people? Is it the story of the player with the highest batting average or all the other players?

Some historians, led by J.C.D. Clark, have stressed the degree to which English society remained an *ancien régime*, unaffected by the first stirrings of the Enlightenment. He reminds us that in 1660, 1714, and even in 1815, England was, after all, a monarchy. That monarchy presided over a hierarchical social structure based more on birth than wealth. It retained a state Church. Its economy was still heavily agricultural; its society, rural. In other words, Clark and his followers would stress the degree to which, for all

the sound and fury of the previous two and a half centuries, England really hadn't changed very much since 1485.

Others, for example Paul Langford, have noted the degree to which England was well on its way to Enlightenment, democracy, and the Industrial Revolution. These historians would concede all of Clark's points, but they would also point out that after 1688–1689, the monarchy was a constitutional one, ultimately subordinate to Parliament. The social structure was the most fluid in Europe, with wealth and achievement beginning to dislodge birth as criteria for admission into its highest ranks.

Other religious traditions were increasingly tolerated, in fact as well as in law. More and more people were moving to cities and getting their bread by trade and industry. In short, the Commercial, Financial, and Glorious Revolutions combined, as we will see, with a slowdown in population to erode hierarchy, increase opportunity, and make England the most open and fluid society in Europe.

Therefore, these historians stress the degree of change achieved or implied since 1485, and England's relative modernity in 1714. I would argue that they stress the incipient rather than the vestigial or even the actual.

The key to many of these changes was a demographic shift: Basically, the rapid population growth of the period 1540–1650 finally slowed down. In fact, it reversed itself. After 1660, the population of England and Wales fell from 5.5 million souls in 1661 to 5.2 million in 1686. Then it rose slowly again to 5.4 million in 1701, and then to 5.7 million in 1721. All told, the population of the British Isles at the death of Queen Anne in 1714 would be about 9.5 million people—5.6 million in England, 1.1 million in Scotland, and 2.8 million in Ireland.

This slowdown—this reduction in population and then gradual increase—did not happen because people were starving to death. In fact, by 1710, agricultural improvements in England have made that country a net exporter of grain. Still, bad harvests in the 1690s and 1720s could still raise food prices and decrease consumption and lower resistance to disease. Genuine

famine remained a real threat in Scotland (1696–1699) and Ireland (1708–1710 and 1728–1730).

More important to the slowdown between 1660 and 1730 were other factors. Epidemic disease continued to attack the population. The last serious outbreak of plague was 1665–1666, but most people remain vulnerable to diphtheria, dysentery, influenza, measles, scarlet fever, smallpox, typhoid fever, typhus, and whooping cough. Medicine was getting better at diagnosis. Note that you recognize all of the above diseases, instead of things like the bloody flux and griping of the guts. They had some idea of what these were, but were still powerless to prevent or cure any of them until the first inoculations for smallpox later in the century. We're just on the verge.

Only in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century would medical practitioners begin to stress things like good nutrition and hygiene, frequent changes of clothes, and even bathing. Most historians believe that it's that, rather than any advances in medical technology, that will eventually lead to a population boom not just in Britain, but in Europe.

Average life expectancy actually dipped to 30 by 1680, before rising to 37 by 1700 and 42 by the 1750s. Again, we're very grateful for all those parish registers that allow us to make these calculations. During this period, people married later than before, on average around 27 or 28. Note how that is going to cut down on your number of children. You're getting a later start on reproduction. Infant mortality remained high. Fifteen percent of children still died before their first birthday. Ten percent more died by the age of 10. Anyone who saw 30 had a very good chance of seeing 30 more. If you made it to 30, you were likely to continue living for some time.

More people than in the previous period we looked at weren't marrying at all. Some 25 percent of the population is avoiding marital ties. Maybe half a million people had emigrated to the American colonies, another thing that brings the population of England and Wales down.

These factors are hard to figure out. I can't explain these factors. They seem to be a delayed reaction to the harsh economic times of the previous period—

of how things were before 1660. All of these factors, in any case, served as a brake on population growth.

The demographic slowdown had a profound effect on the economy. What I'm going to do now is go through various segments of the economy and talk about them. I'll begin with agriculture. Agriculture was still the beating heart of English economic life. It employed maybe three-quarters of the population in one way or another (Clark's point: This is still a rural country). As the number of agricultural workers fell, rents fell too and prices fell, helped by good harvests in the 1680s and between 1700 and 1720.

Wages rose. This affected different groups in the agricultural world differently. You can probably predict how this is going to go. Husbandmen, cottagers, and even the poor prospered relatively speaking. For once, the rich, as we'll see, may be getting richer, but the poor were not getting poorer. Big landowners were sufficiently diversified to survive and even prosper. In other words, if you weren't completely dependent on land—if you had enough money to spend on other things—then you were still going to do well. They did well out of office-holding—remember the growth of the administration during this period. They invested in government funds, trading companies, turnpikes, and canals. We'll talk about some of those later in this lecture.

Great landowners exploited their mineral rights to supply growing industries. (Again, we'll mention that later.) They profited from new scientific agricultural techniques. They snapped up more land when middling and small landowners went bust. This is the group that suffered during this period: minor landowners, the closest thing that England has to a kind of (I don't want to say "middle class") middling group during this time. We're talking about minor gentry and yeomen, the backbone of the Tory party. Remember that Tory politics is all about, "Why are we left out?" Here's a lot of the reason. They got clobbered in the later Stuart economy. They're the ones who have to pay the higher wages to their few workers and also to make do with lower rents from their tenants.

They were already paying high land taxes because of the wars. Many lost their lands, at least at the bottom of the yeoman class, and fell into the ranks of husbandmen or cottagers. It was this group that was most susceptible to

Tory charges that Whig governments and moneyed men were draining the land to fund the war.

What about trade? This is a great period for trade. As we've seen, trade boomed during the period of the Commercial Revolution, roughly from 1660–1730. It expanded in total gross value from £7.9 million in 1663–1669, to £14.5 million in 1721–1724. I'm sorry those dates are rather odd. That's because the English customs administration didn't really start taking accurate and systematic statistics until the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. These are the only numbers we have.

Trade had changed after 1660. The biggest change is that wool no longer matters so much. Remember that up to this point, wool was English trade. English trade was now led by the import to English territories and the re-export to Europe of Caribbean sugar, number one. Sugar was the oil of its day. It was lucrative, and it was essential to Europeans who needed something to enliven their palates. Demand rose (here come some more numbers) from 26 million pounds in the late 1660s to 42.5 million by the early 1700s to 93 million pounds (that's weight, not pounds sterling) by the late 1720s.

Sugar was followed by American tobacco, furs, salt fish, Indian silks, dyes, and spices; Portuguese Madera and port wine; Spanish oranges, figs, and raisins; Italian olive oils and silks; and Middle Eastern coffee. I want you to have a sense of any reasonably prosperous Londoner, or even a Glaswegian or Liverpoolian, having all of these products from around the world now available to them in a way that would not have been true 100 years earlier. The first coffee houses appear in London, for example, in the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

All these trades were guaranteed and safeguarded by the Navigation Acts, the provisions of Utrecht, and the power of the Royal Navy. They grew lucrative because of the booming English economy, which was putting money into people's pockets. Of course, underpinning it all was the slave trade and the murderous exploitation of Africans in the New World.

The notorious “triangular trade” worked like this: English slavers shipped metal goods and textiles to Africa. There, they traded with African chiefs for captives. These people were transported to the New World in appalling conditions at the rate of 5,000 a year. They were chained side-by-side and prostrate in damp, close, dark holds with no room to stand. The death rate on the voyage ranged from 13 percent to 23 percent. Generally, it’s a worse death rate earlier in the period than later.

Once sold to a West Indian sugar grower or an American tobacco grower, these people were treated like human machinery. They were forced to work long hours in intense heat. The average life expectancy of a slave in the West Indies was just seven years, because the slave owners could work them to death because there was an endless supply. The conditions for slaves only improved later with the abolition of the slave trade, which meant that you had to preserve the lives of your slaves.

House slaves (those chosen to work in the master’s house) had better lives. They were often educated and given some material consideration.

The tobacco or sugar harvested by these people was sent to east coast American ports for refining. Then, it was shipped to London, Bristol, Liverpool, Glasgow, etc., and then to the interior or on to Europe at a considerable markup.

What’s my point? A good deal of British and American prosperity in the 18<sup>th</sup> century was built on the backs of captive Africans or at the expense of Native Americans driven from their land. Thanks to this exploitation, the Navigation Acts, the possessions and trading rights added at Utrecht, and the enforcement and the capabilities of the Royal Navy, British merchants monopolized these trades and became fabulously wealthy. British ports dominated because the Navigation Acts said everything had to go through a British port. American colonial economies prospered.

Industry was a much less big deal during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The Industrial Revolution doesn’t start for another 50 years from 1714. Most industry was cottage industry. There was shipbuilding on the coasts and coal mining in Durham and the Midlands, and metalwork in the Midlands and North.

Most industry remained traditional. Craftsmen produced goods on spec. They didn't have many apprentices. They lived with their families above their shops.

Textiles were still manufactured using the "putting out" system. A factor would distribute raw wool to a group of housewives in the country, and he'd come back in a month. Paradoxically, that kind of decentralized system requires a pretty sophisticated infrastructure, because you've got to maintain communication across vast distances.

Rivers had always been an important means of transportation. Bulk goods were shipped along them. Roads improved, and it was possible to move goods from point of manufacture to consumer. As that happened, fairs and markets became less important.

Inns remained important service centers. They provided accommodation, points of contact for merchants, and postal services. They're a bit like a full-service hotel providing Internet access to the business traveler today. On the less exalted level, you had the petty chapmen and the peddlers who went around the country distributing goods. They couldn't stay at an inn. They might find some rest in a barn or a hayloft.

The first real banks developed during this period. They offered cheap money at less than six percent. They began to proliferate in London and the countryside. An informal stock exchange developed in London. New stock companies proliferated all through the 1690s to make glass bottles, sword blades, lute strings, and gunpowder. As we saw with the South Sea Bubble, there was no regulation of these early companies. Stock "jobbers" bought and sold stocks in the informal surroundings of Jonathan's and Garraway's coffee houses in London. The first formal stock exchange isn't established until 1773.

There was nothing to prevent an unscrupulous entrepreneur from selling stock in a company that didn't exist. That may explain one newspaper ad for stock, "In an undertaking to be revealed at a later time." Apparently, people still bought it, so it should come as no surprise to you that many of



the companies founded in the '90s were gone by the 1720s. Still, stocks and bonds are where people could make the most money the fastest.

Outside London, merchants kept up with their purchases and with the news (shipping news, for example) by the first newspapers, which become regular by the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. There's also a reliable penny post service in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century.

Finally, to minimize the effects of fire and flood, there were the first insurance companies, such as the Sun Insurance Company. Lloyds Insurance begins as a coffee house where merchants on overseas voyages would come to hear the news about their ships.

I want to make a brief point about insurance. The idea of insurance is that an act of God doesn't stop us. My ship can go down, and I'm still not going to be impoverished. There's something very modern about the idea of insurance.

As we've seen, the benefits of this economy were not shared easily. Despite the reduced profitability of land, the late 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries were a golden age for the landed nobility and the substantial gentry. They still comprised just two percent of the population, but they own over half the land in England. As before, we can divide them into the nobility and the gentry. The nobility are growing in size from about 130 to 180 English peers by 1714. The period from 1660–1714 is a good age for them. Remember, they led the Glorious Revolution of 1688. After 1714, the House of Lords becomes less important. Precisely because the government can pack it with its supporters, all the real action happens in the House of Commons with the gentry.

The line between the gentle and the common is blurring during this period. Gentry don't behave as they did in the past. For example, many gentry opt to live in town from this period on. Because there's not a clear line of demarcation between the "gentle" and the common, this is a period in which the English aristocracy is the most open in Europe.

How rich were these people? The greatest peers, like the Duke of Bedford or the Duke of Marlborough, made between £20,000–40,000 a year. An average

peer made maybe £6,000, and the greater gentry several thousands. The lesser gentry made as little as £200 a year.

As during the Elizabethan period, the greatest aristocrats build magnificent country houses designed by the greatest architects of the day: William Talman, Hawksmoor, and Sir John Vanbrugh. They filled these houses with the carvings of Grinling Gibbons and the history painting of Louis Laguerre, and they surrounded these houses with vast deer parks and formal gardens. I refer to the Duke of Marlborough's Blenheim, the Duke of Devonshire's Chatsworth, the Duke of Norfolk's Castle Howard, the Duke of Somerset's Petworth, or Sir Robert Walpole's Houghton.

Nevertheless, their proprietors would spend half the year in London. They would go to court and Parliament. Increasingly, the court had competition from other institutions, for example the theater and, from 1705, the Italian opera; coffee houses like White's and Buttons; and private clubs like the Kit Kat or the Beefsteak. We'll talk about coffee houses and clubs in the next lecture.

There were pleasure gardens like Vauxhall and later Ranelagh, where for a small fee one could stroll beautiful gardens, hear stirring music, meet delightful company, and be alone with them in private booths. Here Samuel Pepys found, "a rascally, roguing, whoring sort of people"—so of course, he went often.

Finally, an aristocrat might spend a month at a spa like Bath, Epsom, or Tunbridge Wells, or go to a race meeting at Epsom or Newmarket (horse races).

The point of all this is that all of these diversions are pulling aristocrats out of the countryside. The typical aristocrat life is now quite amphibious between London and Bath. You're hardly ever in your country house.

Do you remember my point in those earlier social history lectures about the distance between the landed aristocrat and his tenants? Who's filling that gap? The lesser gentry—the Tory gentry are running the localities on a sort of town-by-town, estate-by-estate basis. They can't afford to go to London,

and there's nothing there for them anyway, because Walpole is running the show and they're frozen out. They live in smaller, but still comfortable, houses. They serve as JPs. They stay closer to their estates and, after 1660, they get some sampling of the pleasures of the capital, because towns increasingly imitate London by building assembly rooms, holding masked balls and dances, and establishing their own theater companies.

In other words, after 1714, there's a sense in which non-London urban England begins to catch up. This means it's perfectly possible to have a fun life in the countryside without ever going to London. It could be argued that London's greatest dominance is around 1700 and that it declines thereafter.

In these assemblies, the lesser gentry might be joined by the prosperous middling orders—the merchants and the professionals. They were the government officials who ran the wars, the military and naval officers who planned and executed them, the moneyed men who financed them, the merchants who created the wealth and trade that supported and grew by them, and the professional men who solved the disputes that arose out of the resulting new wealth.

In other words, I'm arguing that the middle orders benefited tremendously from the wars and this increase in trade. These people might respect their "betters" and they might even ape them, but they had a growing sense of their own importance to the national commonwealth—a sense that they were every bit as "gentle" as the best landowner. By the end of the century, the middling orders will be demanding a place at the table of government, but not yet.

The greatest merchants, in fact, rivaled the nobility in wealth. Big overseas merchant families or partner-based firms traded in West Indian sugar, Virginia tobacco, Indian tea and spices, or African slaves, making thousands of pounds a year. Their daughters therefore might marry into a gentler and noble house. When he visited England in the 1720s, Voltaire noticed these unions between the great mercantile houses and the great aristocratic houses. It wouldn't have happened in France.

There were below them middling domestic merchants who traded within the British Isles. We're talking about shipping grain from the south, coal or wool from the north, or cheese or butter from the west. They might earn £200–1,000 a year.

At about the same level of income would be middling manufacturers: brewers, ironmasters, glassmakers, papermakers, and textile manufacturers. We're not talking about factories yet. They didn't have huge physical plants. That's going to happen in 50 years. These people are in charge of maybe platoons of workers performing tasks for the family firm.

Also in the middling orders were the professionals: lawyers, doctors, clergymen, government officers, military and naval officers, and estate managers. They also prospered during this period, though their wealth varied considerably. A successful country lawyer could make £1,000 a year, whereas just a few pounds a year might work for a poor parish priest.

These groups saw increasing professionalism. That is to say, it was harder and harder to get into the professions. Increasingly, you had to have a university degree if you were a clergyman, or you had to be a member of the Royal College of Physicians. There's a sense of these groups becoming more exclusive.

In fact, they were never a way for a poor boy to rise, because you needed a stake to make your way into them. If you're going to have a university education, that's going to cost you. If you're going to buy a commission in the army, you have to have some money. They were open to outsiders such as younger sons, but above all Dissenters, Jews, and Huguenots. This is a class that is capable of helping people to rise, though just not from the bottom.

Many successful professionals chose not to buy landed estates. They lived in town. This helps to explain why by 1714, some 20–25 percent of the English population was urban. London grew by leaps and bounds. It reached half a million people by 1700 and became the largest city in Europe soon after.

The real story here is other cities booming. Norwich grew to 30,000 and Bristol to 21,000. Increasingly, even county towns offered the amenities previously found in London. I made this point about assembly rooms and the theater. There, craftsmen and smaller tradesmen continued to live their lives above their shops—tailors, haberdashers, shoemakers, blacksmiths, etc. As the century wore on, increasingly the front of their shop would be a showroom. They would continue to live at the back. The wealth of these people varied enormously, but maybe between £30–40.

A point I want to make here about cities and towns is that as the middling orders prosper and grow, and as towns are able to offer a series of plays, balls, and dances, a new model for a successful English life comes to be formed. You don't have to be gentle in the traditional sense. You don't have to buy a landed estate. You can live in town. You can be urban, and that is respectable.

What about ordinary people? Some 90 percent of the population did relatively well during this period. I told you that this is not the worst period to be poor in England, but that has to be qualified. Yeomen might make as much as £250 a year, but they were being squeezed by high taxes, high labor costs, and low rents and food prices. They're in that middle group, as in the case of the American middle-class that often tends to be squeezed when the economy varies.

The economic conditions around 1660–1714 especially benefited husbandmen and cottagers. In other words, these people started off with less, but they were better able to conserve their “less” and make it grow. These people still made only £6–20 a year, which means that they're still very much living just about hand to mouth. The vast majority of their income is spent on food.

Still, wills and inventories make clear that they owned linen sheets and window curtains, brassware, and books. As Daniel Defoe put it, “Even those we call poor people, journeymen, working and painstaking people do thus: They lie warm, live in plenty, work hard, and know no want.”

Still, a few bad years might drive these people into the ranks of the poor or vagrants and criminals. It's with this group that I'd like to end. Contemporaries still feared them. Remember that there's no large standing army to keep them in line. Religious leaders of all persuasions worried about them. They wanted to launch "the reformation of manners." The trouble was that church attendance was declining because, according to the Toleration Act, you didn't have to go to the Anglican Church anymore. Religion had really gotten a bad name during the 17<sup>th</sup> century when all those people had engaged in all those bizarre sects.

The Poor Law still supplemented the incomes of about four–five percent of the population. In terms of crime, people still thought it was rising, in part because of famous criminals, whose stories, thanks to the easing of censorship, are getting out. People read about Jack Sheppard, the escape artist, or the "thief-taker," Jonathan Wild, who ran a gang of pickpockets, and then would advertise in the London newspapers that you could pick up your discovered lost goods and pay Wild.

In response, the number of capital crimes rose from 50 in 1688 to over 200 by 1820, but they're still hanging a very small proportion of those accused. That is to say that this legal system still works more by threat and intimidation than it does by actual cruelty or terror.

The lower orders threatened right back through crime and controlled riot, which appealed for justice to the upper classes: "Look, we're rioting over the price of bread because the price of bread is unfair. Please help us." In short, this increasingly affluent society was still gripped by wild disparities in wealth and the ever-present threat that the have-nots would rise up against the haves. It may have been stable politically, but not socially.

In this lecture, we've described a society on the make, growing wealthier and more fluid with the decline in population and growth in trade. For once, both the rich and poor grew richer together, but at the expense of African slaves, Native Americans, Irish peasants, and middling yeomen. The wealth so generated made possible a whole new audience for art and entertainment. It is to the culture of early 18<sup>th</sup>-century England that we will turn in the next lecture.

## The Land and Its People in 1714—Part II

### Lecture 47

**After the reign of Charles II ... monarchs spent their attention and their money on the wars with France, while the “rage of party” drove away anyone who was in opposition. Once the parties took over, if you were a Whig and the Tories were in power, you weren’t welcome at court. That of course reduced the court’s clientele. ... This decline of court culture was part of the gradual erosion of royal power after 1688.**

**B**efore 1660, the epicenter of English high culture had been the church and the royal court. As these two institutions grew weaker, that gradually ceased to be the case. The Reformation and civil wars weakened church patronage of the arts. Protestantism in general put less emphasis on images and ceremonies, though Arminian Anglicanism fostered eloquent ritual, ornate church decor, and elaborate church music. The great age of church building was over, with the exception of London. After the Great Fire of 1666, Sir Christopher Wren designed a new St. Paul’s Cathedral and numerous parish churches. The Act for Building Fifty London Churches led to commissions for later architects.

The court maintained its cultural importance under Charles II, but became, subsequently, a cultural backwater. The Restoration court fostered an ornate Baroque style that complemented the divine-right aspirations of the Stuarts. Because Charles II had both taste and a willingness to spend money he did not have, he encouraged choral anthems and celebratory odes by Locke, Blow, and Purcell; heroic drama, comedies of manners, and satirical poetry by Dryden, Etherege, Wycherley, and John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester; portraits by Lely and Kneller and allegorical ceiling painting by Verrio; and palace renovations by Wren, filled with wood-carving by Gibbons. But subsequent monarchs lavished their attention and money on wars. Moreover, James II commissioned an elaborate Catholic Chapel Royal from Wren, but his Catholicizing policies drove away many good Protestants. William III and Mary II commissioned beautiful formal gardens, magnificent alterations to Hampton Court and Kensington, and the birthday odes of Purcell, but court life grew moribund after Mary’s death in 1694. Anne revived public



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**St. Paul's Cathedral is the religious heart of London. It is 585 feet long, making it the biggest building in London and the second longest church in Christendom.**

thanksgivings for military victory but spent little money on art and was too ill to host an exciting court life. George I wanted to be left alone. This decline of court culture was intimately bound up with the gradual erosion of royal power.

Aristocrats took up much of the slack. In the countryside, they commissioned great country houses from the likes of Vanbrugh and Hawksmoor, surrounding them with formal gardens and filling them with choice artwork. In town, they built luxurious townhouses. They also patronized the theater and concert hall; balls, pleasure gardens, and spas; and coffee houses and clubs. Individual aristocrats became great patrons, often in exchange for favorable political propaganda: Lord Somers gave early support to the essayists Addison, Steele, and Swift. Robert Harley, Earl of Oxford, supported Swift and Defoe. The Duke of Chandos supported Handel.

The new wealth flooding into England and the rising fortunes of middling merchants and professionals made possible wider public support for the arts.



The theater was already “public” in 1660. As the court declined, enterprising theater managers gave the members of that public what they wanted Italian opera, revivals of Shakespeare, and masked balls. Concert life moved out of the church and court with the founding of the first public concert series, by a poorly paid royal musician named John Banister, in 1672. By 1714, there were a number of regular London concert halls, and secular music was also available at London’s pleasure gardens. The next half century would be dominated by the German immigrant George Frederic Handel, who wrote instrumental music but specialized in religious oratorios mounted before a paying public.

Painters increasingly worked for middle-class patrons. Hogarth was able to support himself by selling prints satirizing English life. The literary world also freed itself from subordination to the tastes of the Church and court. The great entrepreneur was Jacob Tonson, who managed the careers of Addison, Congreve, Dryden, Prior, Swift, and Wycherley. The poet Alexander Pope is credited with being the first writer to support himself without royal or aristocratic patronage with such poems as his translations of Homer, *The Rape of the Lock* (1712; 1714), and *The Dunciad* (1742–1743). Daniel Defoe did equally well out of his travel books and novels, most notably *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), *Moll Flanders* (1722), and *Journal of the Plague Year* (1722). For the first time, English women writers, such as Aphra Behn and Mary Astell, achieved success. Many writers supported themselves with journalism. After the Licensing Act expired in 1695, regular non-governmental newspapers appeared. The first daily newspaper, *The Daily Courant*, appeared in 1702. Defoe’s *The Review* (1704–1713) and Swift’s *The Examiner* (1710–1711), as well as assorted “Grub Street” pamphlets, contained political commentary. Addison and Steele wrote elegant, cultural commentary in *The Tatler* (1709–1710) and *The Spectator* (1711–1712; 1714). All these writers shared basic concerns, characteristics, and themes.

If the culture of the later Stuart court was Baroque, that of the early Hanoverian aristocracy was Neoclassical, especially Roman. British aristocrats, building a great empire, saw themselves as latter-day Roman patricians, living in a new Augustan age. Like the Romans, they presided over a society held together by patronage, paternalism, and deference. They imitated Roman culture: They had themselves painted in togas as Roman

senators. After 1714, they designed their houses and public buildings in the Palladian style to look like Roman temples.

Closely related to Neoclassicism was a growing belief in the reliability and power of human reason and its offspring, science. Early in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Francis Bacon, Viscount St. Albans, had argued for the pursuit of knowledge about the physical world without regard to religious or *a priori* assumptions. Instead, he advocated the scientific method, that is, repeated observation of the world, coordinated with mathematics, to produce a theory that could be tested with experimentation. These ideas were applied to the natural world in the 17<sup>th</sup> century by many Europeans, including Englishmen, such as the chemist Robert Boyle, the physicist Robert Hooke, the astronomer Sir Edmund Halley, and above all, the mathematician and physicist Sir Isaac Newton, who postulated the force of gravity and his three laws of motion, invented the calculus, and published his findings in the *Principia Mathematica* of 1687. The *Principia* explained, to the satisfaction of both scientists and lay people, how the universe worked. Newton and his colleagues discovered a physical world that was rational, mathematical, and predictable, that is, governed by unvarying natural laws and discoverable by humans. This implied that humans could not only understand the universe but harness its power and change its course for the good of humankind.

In his *Essay on Human Understanding* (1690), John Locke argued that reason and the habits of the scientific method could be applied to human problems, not just natural ones. Applying reason to the problem of government, he justified the Glorious Revolution in *The Two Treatises of Government* (1689–1690). Applying it to religion, he argued in *The Reasonableness of Christianity* (1695) that nothing in that belief system contradicted reason. These ideas had revolutionary implications for religion. Few became atheists as a result of the new science, but many sought a Christianity that was less dependent on the zeal and irrationality that had given Puritans a bad name in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Deists came to believe that God was a sort of celestial watchmaker, setting the universe in motion, then

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**John Locke argued that reason and the habits of the scientific method could be applied to human problems, not just natural ones.**

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withdrawing from its day-to-day management. Latitudinarian Anglicans, usually Whigs, sought to accommodate the new scientific skepticism with more traditional belief and emphasized toleration in general. Traditional “High Church” Anglican Tories were scandalized at the idea that religious belief should be subject to reason or conceded to be a matter of opinion.

The idea that the world ran according to unvarying laws that could be mastered was applied to societies and economies by the first political economists. The earliest demographers and statisticians, such as Sir William Petty, John Graunt, and Gregory King, sought to base government policy on an understanding of the population and physical resources of England. The earliest political economists, including Defoe, Charles Davenant, and Bernard de Mandeville, sought to explain and predict how economies worked. Their pioneering—and primitive—work was satirized by traditionalists, such as Swift in Book III of *Gulliver’s Travels*. But this confidence in reason, science, and human capabilities identifies English culture in 1714 as being on the brink of modernity. ■

### Suggested Reading

Bucholz and Key, *Early Modern England*, conclusion, sec. 4.

Hoppit, *Land of Liberty?* chaps. 6–7, 13.

### Questions to Consider

1. Why did English monarchs fail to realize the usefulness of court cultural patronage after 1685?
2. Why were science and reason seen as challenges to traditional religion?

## The Land and Its People in 1714—Part II

### Lecture 47—Transcript

In the last lecture, we examined the demographic, economic, and social realities that were fast making later Stuart England the wealthiest and most open society on earth. This lecture examines the intellectual and artistic life that that wealth and openness made possible.

During this period, the Church and court ceased to be the primary patrons of the arts. They were replaced by the landed aristocracy and the general public, who sponsored architects like Wren, Vanbrugh, and Hawksmoor; writers like Dryden, Swift, Pope, Addison, and Steele; musicians like Purcell and Handel; and painters like Lely, Kneller, and later Hogarth.

This period also saw the Age of Reason and the Scientific Revolution give birth to the Enlightenment through the influence of thinkers like Newton and Locke on science, philosophy, religion, the economy, and society. In embracing these influences, the inhabitants of later Stuart and early Hanoverian England were laying the groundwork for a modern society.

Prior to 1660, the epicenter of English high culture had always been the Church and the royal court, but as these two institutions grew weaker, that gradually ceased to be the case. It was the Reformation and the civil wars that weakened the Church patronage of the arts. Protestantism in general put less emphasis on images and rituals, though Arminian Anglicanism did foster the revival of the Book of Common Prayer, eloquent ritual, ornate church decor, and elaborate Baroque church music.

The great age of cathedral and church building was over, apart from London. You see, the Great Fire of 1666 was a great spur to rebuilding. Sir Christopher Wren designed some 25 new Baroque churches, like St. Mary le Bow; St. Bride's, Fleet Street; and St. Andrew, Holborn. By the way, of these, at least two were lost to German bombs and 10 have been destroyed to make way for new development. Insert rueful comment here. The rest remain to delight tourists.

Fortunately, his masterpiece survives: the new St. Paul's Cathedral, built between 1675 and 1711. Its nave was completed in 1697, in time for the thanksgiving service for Ryswick. Its dome, rising 365 feet, was capped by Sir Christopher's son in 1708. The architect is buried in the Cathedral with my favorite epitaph in all of English history: "*Lector, si monumentum requiris, circumspice*" ("Reader, if you require his monument, look about you.")

Later, in 1711, the Act for Building Fifty London Churches led to new commissions for other architects. Thomas Archer built St. Paul, Deptford, and St. John, Smith Square; James Gibbs built St. Mary le Strand and St. Martin in the Fields; and Nicholas Hawksmoor built St. Anne's, Limehouse, and St. George, Bloomsbury. Again, all of these are available for you to visit in London.

The court maintained its cultural importance under Charles II, but after his reign, it would become a cultural backwater. The Restoration court fostered an ornate Baroque style in the arts, which complemented the divine-right aspirations of the Stuarts. Because Charles II had both taste and a willingness to spend money he didn't have, he encouraged the style in magnificent chorale anthems and celebratory odes by Matthew Locke, John Blow, and Henry Purcell; and in heroic drama, comedies of manners, and poetry satirizing court life by John Dryden, George Etherege, William Wycherley, and John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester. It was Rochester who wrote the famous epitaph for Charles II: "Here lies our sovereign lord the king, whose word no man relies on, who never said a foolish thing nor never did a wise one."

The court commissioned compelling portraits of its inhabitants and mistresses by Sir Peter Lely and Godfrey Kneller, and an elaborate allegorical ceiling painting by Antonio Verrio, and magnificent palace renovations by Wren and Hugh May. These were filled with intricate wood-carving by Grinling Gibbons. Some of this survives and is well worth visiting.

Thus, the court still remained, in the words of Walter Bagett, "The focus where everything fascinating gathered and where everything exciting centered." It still provided visitors during the reign of Charles II with impressive architecture, splendid parks, sumptuous decor and furnishings,

dramatic ceremonies, balls, concerts, plays, the royal art collection, free meals, the best preaching, an endless source of gossip, and the greatest marriage market in England.

As I've argued before in this course, and also in my first book, the court declined after the reign of Charles II. Later monarchs spent their attention and their money on the wars with France, while the "rage of party" drove away anyone who was in opposition. Once the parties took over, if you were a Whig and the Tories were in power, you weren't welcome at court. That of course reduced the court's clientele.

James II commissioned an elaborate Catholic Chapel Royal from Wren, but that didn't necessarily bring Protestants to court. Of course, most of his potential court clientele was Protestant.

William III and Mary II commissioned beautiful formal gardens and Wren's magnificent alterations at Hampton Court and Kensington, as well as the birthday odes of Henry Purcell. After Mary's death in 1694, court life grew moribund. William wasn't terribly interested in bringing people in.

Anne revived public thanksgivings for military victory. She was the first monarch since Elizabeth to go to St. Paul's to celebrate Marlborough's victories. These were great showcases for the musicians of her Chapel Royal, but faced with fighting a world war, she actually spent very little money on art. She was also too ill most of the time to host an exciting court life.

Finally, as we've seen, George I just wanted to be left alone.

This decline of court culture was part of the gradual erosion of royal power after 1688. I think this is a sign of power leaving the monarchy and going somewhere else. That going somewhere else means that that decline did not mean the decline of elite culture. Instead, it opened up other opportunities for artists. Artists had to find other patrons.

At the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, aristocrats took up a lot of the slack from the court, both politically and culturally. In the countryside as we've seen, they commissioned great country houses from the greatest architects of the day.

They surrounded them with elaborate formal gardens. They filled them with choice artwork. We talked about this in Lecture Forty-Six.

In town, they built luxurious townhouses. They also patronized old institutions like the public theater, taverns, cock matches, and horse races, but they also helped to promote new ones that had not been seen before the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, like the first concert halls, pleasure gardens, spas, and coffee houses and clubs.

If you listen carefully to that list, you'll note that most of these institutions actually mixed aristocrats with anyone else who could pay admission. London's coffee houses in particular were famous for bringing people of various ranks together. Their cover charge was only a penny, so lots of people—even ordinary workers in London—could afford to go there. The first coffee house is often said to be the Smyrna, which was founded in the City—in the business district of London—around 1652. Since coffee was imported from the Middle East, here's another sign of that burgeoning economy and that Commercial Revolution we've been talking about.

Here, in the coffee house, patrons could drink strong coffee, smoke from clay pipes, read newspapers, and deliberate over the great issues of the day. According to one contemporary, "So great a university I think there ne'er was any, in which you may a scholar be for spending of a penny." Apparently, they didn't teach poetry.

According to Macauley, those who wished to find a gentleman commonly asked not where he lived in Fleet Street or Chancery Lane, but whether he frequented the Grecian or the Rainbow. Individual coffee houses became associated with particular professions and interests: Lloyd's at 16 Lombard Street in the City for overseas merchants; Jonathan's and Garraway's, also in the City, for stock "jobbers" and investors; Will's, in Bow Street, Covent Garden, for poets and wits, where John Dryden held forth by the fire; Buttons, near Covent Garden, for essayists (Addison actually ran *The Spectator* from here; we'll talk about *The Spectator* later in this lecture); and the Grecian for scholars (appropriate name). Tory politicians met at the Cocoa Tree, and Whigs at the St. James, just across the street from the palace.

Eventually, aristocrats eventually came to dislike all this social mixing, openness, and lack of exclusivity, so they began to turn some of these coffee houses into private clubs. There was White's for gamblers. It still exists, by the way. There was the Beefsteak for gluttons, and a whole series of Hellfire clubs for young rakes. Some clubs were so secret that we're not sure that they really existed. According to the Tories, radical Whigs used to gather on 30 January, the anniversary of Charles I's execution, at a secret Calf's Head Club to dine on a calf's head in mock commemoration of what they did to the royal martyr. Whigs, of course, denied this: "There's no such thing as a Calf's Head Club. It's all a lie." The Whigs did admit to being members of the famous Kit Kat Club, which operated like a little kingless court. It was named after a man named Christopher, who ran the club. Members mostly drank, but they also commissioned or made possible lots of art. Whig political propaganda emanated from the Kit Kat Club. The members wrote poems to various ladies who were nominated as "toasts." If you were a toast of the Kit Kat, you had your image engraved on a glass.

Most famously, the members were painted in a series of paintings by one of its members, Sir Godfrey Kneller. These now hang in the National Portrait Gallery in London. I want to make a very important point here. Sir Godfrey Kneller was the principal painter to the Crown. A generation earlier, if he were doing a series of paintings, he would have painted a series of court ladies, but now, at the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, as political power moves away from the court, who's he painting? A series of party politicians. You can still go to the National Portrait Gallery and see these.

Individual aristocrats became great patrons, often in exchange for favorable political propaganda. Lord Somers gave early support to Joseph Addison, Richard Steele, and Jonathan Swift. Charles Montagu, Lord Halifax, did the same for William Congreve, the playwright. Robert Harley, Earl of Oxford, kept a stable of writers. He supported Daniel Defoe and Jonathan Swift. Oxford's impeachment is referred to in Book I of *Gulliver's Travels*. Oxford also amassed a great collection of books and manuscripts, which eventually became part of the nucleus of the British Museum.

The fabulously wealthy James Brydges, Duke of Chandos, supported George Frederic Handel and a full orchestra at his estate at Cannons in Middlesex.



In fact, Handel, the greatest opera composer of his day, came to London in 1710 to work for Queen Anne. Again, it's a sign of what's happening in this society that he found better, more generous patronage with a wealthy aristocrat.

The new wealth flooding into England and the rising fortunes of the middling merchants and professionals made possible something new. You could possibly listen to this lecture and previous lectures and say to me, "Aristocratic patronage was always there. Remember the Earl of Leicester and the Duke of Buckingham with their amazing art collections." That's true. What was new about the early 18<sup>th</sup> century was now middling orders are starting to do it. Regular folks are starting to patronize art in a way that was impossible in the Middle Ages.

The theater was already (always) a public art form by 1660. In fact, it actually became a little more exclusive during the Restoration. The old outdoor theaters had been shut down by the Puritans. They weren't revived, which means that it was no longer possible for the groundlings to get in. Restoration indoor theaters tended to have higher cover charges or admission. The court also tried to regulate very hard what was going on at the theater. The Master of the Revels and the Lord Chamberlain would vet all the plays to make sure that they weren't politically sensitive. On the other hand, the court didn't really care if there was a lot of sexual innuendo. That was fine.

On the plus side, Charles II promoted the first stage actresses. He wanted to see women on the stage.

As the court declined in the 1690s, enterprising theater managers came up like John James Heidegger and Christopher and John Rich. They became adept at giving the public what it wanted. What the public wanted was Italian opera and also heavily edited revivals of Shakespeare. In part, this is a reaction, because the clergy has been complaining about and criticizing all the sexual innuendo. They got away with it by just putting it into Shakespeare.

In 1706, Heidegger offered the first masked balls at which a duke could dance with a seamstress, or a chambermaid with a rich merchant, and no one would be the wiser.

Concert life moved out of the Church and the court. The first public concert series was established by John Banister, a poorly paid royal musician. Here's another example: In 1672, he needs to get some money, so he decides to offer concerts to the paying public. From 1678, Thomas Britton, a London coal merchant, put on regular concerts in the back room of his shop. Conditions were not ideal. According to one contemporary, the room was not much bigger than the "bung hole of a cask" and listeners developed a hearty sweat. All the greats played here, however, including Handel.

By 1714, there were regular concert halls, and London was very much on the circuit. The great dominating musician of course was Handel, who switched over from operas to oratorios because it was so much more expensive to mount an opera. He was better able to support himself with oratorios.

Painters also increasingly worked for middle-class patrons. Now it isn't just aristocrats and courtiers who want to be immortalized, but ordinary folks—prosperous merchants, lawyers, and doctors—as well. After Anne's reign, William Hogarth would support himself by satirizing English life in series of prints like *The Rake's Progress*, *The Harlot's Progress*, and *Industry and Idleness*. People snapped these up.

The literary world also freed itself from subordination to the tastes of the Church and the court. Puritan writers had done without patronage for a long time. There was John Bunyan, who wrote *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* and *The Pilgrim's Progress*. He wrote these in prison. There was John Milton, who wrote *Paradise Lost* and *Samson Agonistes*. Milton was paid only £10 for *Paradise Lost*, but Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* was a bestseller.

As the money poured in from the Commercial Revolution, mainstream writers began to be able to support themselves out of selling their work. Whereas Bunyan was writing for a fairly narrow Puritan audience, these writers were writing for everybody. The great entrepreneur here was a publisher named Jacob Tonson, who handled the careers of Addison, Congreve, Prior, and Swift.

It's the poet Alexander Pope who's credited with being the first writer to support himself fully out of his writings. That is, he didn't support himself out of Church patronage, court patronage, or even aristocratic patronage at all. In a way, he couldn't. He was a Roman Catholic, and that helps to explain this. He supported himself out of his translations of Homer, poems like *The Rape of the Lock*, and perhaps his most ambitious poem, *The Dunciad*, a mock epic about the confederation of dunces running England—or that's at least how he saw it. He was a Tory.

Daniel Defoe did equally well out of his travel books and novels, most notably *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), and *Moll Flanders* and *Journal of the Plague Year*, both published in 1722.

For the first time, English women writers achieved success: Aphra Behn and Susanna Centlivre as playwrights, and Mary Delarivier Manley and Mary Astell as political and social critics, respectively.

A crucial development that allowed this to happen was the lapsing of the Licensing Act in 1695. It was still dangerous to be a writer. Dryden and John Tuchon were beaten up on the streets of London by political enemies. Defoe was put in the stocks for satirizing Anglican intolerance in a pamphlet called *The Shortest Way with Dissenters*. It's almost as good as *A Modest Proposal*. Aval Voullier and John Redpath were prosecuted on charges of seditious libel, and John Matthews was hanged as late as 1719.

Still, I would argue that between 1695 and the re-imposition of censorship in 1737 by Walpole, the English press was easily the freest in Europe and probably as free as it ever was before the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The English were pioneering the first relatively free press in the world. Writers like those I've named tended to be based in Moorfields, London, in an area known as "Grub Street." Grub Street writers were famous for hackwork and journalism. They worked on newspapers, essays, almanacs, political broadsides, advice books, travel books, and true crime narratives. The impression I'm trying to give you is that there was a real market for a varied literature that hadn't existed 50 years before.

Regular non-governmental newspapers appeared after 1695, like *The Post Boy* and *The Flying Post*. The first daily newspaper, *The Daily Courant*, starts publishing a few days after the accession of Anne in 1702 and lasts until 1735. Under George I, you get provincial newspapers like the *Worcester Postman*, the *Newcastle Courant*, and my favorite title, the grandiloquently named *Norwich Transactions of the Universe*. I guess Norwich was the center of the universe, so its transactions had to be reported there.

Some periodicals, like Defoe's *Review* and Swift's *The Examiner*, were political. *The Review* claimed to be, "A weekly history of nonsense, impertinence, vice, and debauchery." That's as good a definition of politics as I've ever heard, but then I live in Chicago.

Addison and Steele wrote elegant cultural commentary in *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*. They practically invented the sort of observatory on-the-town column that a Jimmy Breslin or a Mike Royko might have written in our own day. The character of *The Spectator* was an anonymous Londoner who observed and reported back to his readers, because you never knew who he was. A typical example reads, "As I was walking in the streets about a fortnight ago, I saw an ordinary fellow carrying a cage full of birds upon his shoulder." That's how he gets you into the story. It's actually a story about opera scenery.

Another begins, "There is no place in the town which I so much love to frequent as the royal exchange." Maybe the style is more Miss Manners than it is Royko, but all of these people owe a debt to Addison and Steele. They started this.

On a less sublime level, there was John Dunton's *Athenian News*, which answered questions on all topics from politics to sex. It dispensed advice and popularized new scientific discoveries. It was the Reader's Digest of its day. It's fascinating to read what people write in about and want to know about.

What were all these new ideas? What was the content of this work? I'm going to try to summarize the whole of the style of these writings in a few basic points. All of these writers shared certain basic concerns, characteristics, and

themes. If the culture of the later Stuart court was Baroque, that of the early Hanoverian aristocracy was Neoclassical, especially Roman.

British aristocrats, building a great empire, saw themselves as latter-day Roman patricians—the inheritors of the Roman tradition living in a new Augustan age. Like the Romans, they presided over a society held together by patronage, paternalism, and deference. They imitated Roman culture: They had themselves painted in togas as Roman senators. After 1714, they designed their houses and public buildings in the Palladian style to look like Roman temples. Lord Burlington's Cheswick is a famous example.

Closely related to that Neoclassicism was a growing belief in the reliability of the power of human reason and its offspring, science. The 17<sup>th</sup> century is often referred to as the Age of Reason and the 18<sup>th</sup> as the Age of Enlightenment. Reason can be found everywhere in aristocratic culture around 1700, from the mathematical proportions of aristocratic gardens and parks to the books of aristocratic libraries.

Early in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, men like Francis Bacon, Viscount St. Albans, had argued for the pursuit of knowledge about the physical world without regard to religious or *a priori* assumptions. Instead, they advocated the scientific method—specifically, repeated observation of the world, coordinated with mathematics (reason) to produce a theory that could then be tested with experimentation.

These ideas were applied to the natural world in the 17<sup>th</sup> century by many Europeans, foremost among them Englishmen like Robert Boyle, the chemist who discovered the laws of gas and pressure, which he described in a book called *The Skeptical Chemist* (I love that title; it's so 17<sup>th</sup> century). There was also Robert Hooke, the physicist, who described the true nature of combustion, elasticity, and the arch. He invented the marine barometer and other instruments, and he pioneered the telescopic determination of parallax of a fixed star. Sir Edmund Halley, graduate of my old Oxford College, New College, was the astronomer who predicted accurately solar eclipses and the return of comets.

Above all, there was his friend, Sir Isaac Newton, the mathematician and physicist who postulated the force of gravity and his three laws of motion, invented simultaneously with Leibniz the calculus, and published his findings in the *Principia Mathematica* (or *The Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*) in 1687—all this with only a Cambridge education.

The *Principia* captured the imaginations of contemporaries because it explained to the satisfaction of everybody—not only scientists but also lay people—how the universe worked. In the words of Alexander Pope, “Nature and nature’s laws lay hid in night, God said ‘Let Newton be,’ and all was light.” Newton and his colleagues had discovered a physical world that was rational, mathematical, predictable, and governed by unvarying natural laws, which humans were smart enough now to discover using the scientific method. This implied that humans could not only understand the universe, but maybe they could harness its power. Maybe they could change its course for the good of humankind.

Do you remember from those social history lectures a tremendous feeling that people had of powerlessness? They only lived on average to 35, and sudden death could come at any time. There was no recourse. They were utterly dependent upon nature, what the weather did, and what their bodies did (which they didn’t understand). After Newton and his colleagues got to work, that sense of powerlessness would erode, giving way to the sort of confidence and command with which we associate the modern world: a sense that we can change nature. We can cure your disease. We can make it work.

In his *Essay on Human Understanding* (1690), John Locke went further, arguing that reason and the habits of the scientific method could be applied to human problems, not just natural ones. When he applied the cold light of reason to the problem of government, he justified the removal of a bad ruler, and so justified the Glorious Revolution in *The Two Treatises of Government*. When he applied reason to religion in *The Reasonableness of Christianity* (1695), he concluded there was nothing in that belief system that contradicted reason.

Still, despite Locke's reassurances, obviously these ideas were a real challenge to religion. If humans could understand and control nature—if nature always did the same thing—what did God have to do with it? Why did they need God?

In fact, few people in 17<sup>th</sup>- or 18<sup>th</sup>-century England became atheists because of the new science. Even Newton wrote commentaries on the Book of Revelation. Many people, however, sought a Christianity that was less based on the zeal and irrationality that had given the Puritans such a bad name in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. People looked for a calmer sort of Christianity.

Deists came to believe that God was a sort of celestial watchmaker, setting the universe in motion, and then withdrawing from its day-to-day management. It ran according to the natural laws. Latitudinarian Anglicans (usually Whigs) (I'll explain that name in a moment) tried to accommodate the new scientific skepticism with more traditional belief. They wanted to give people a wide latitude of choice on what they believed, as long as they believed matters that were essential to the faith.

As I'm sure you can predict, traditional "High Church" Anglican Tories were scandalized at the idea that religious belief should be subject to reason. They considered Deists and Latitudinarians to be atheists and heretics, but I'd argue that the Latitudinarian philosophy fit perfectly with an 18<sup>th</sup>-century optimism about human nature and its embrace of the Roman virtues of moderation and stoicism, its rejection of fanaticism, and even of emotion. It complemented the aristocrat's need to maintain dignity, self-composure, and aloofness from the emotions and enthusiasms to which ordinary mortals were prone.

We also see this emphasis on reason in the new science of political economy. It's this period that gives us the first demographers and the earliest political economists, men like Sir William Petty, John Graunt, Gregory King, Charles Davenant, and our friend Defoe. All of these people believed that human behavior could be explained rationally, reduced to mathematics, and predicted. They were the precursors of today's economists, psychologists, sociologists, and pollsters. By the way, Swift had a lot of fun with them in

Book III of *Gulliver's Travels*, but I would argue that their confidence that this was true tells us more about this Age of Reason.

Finally, as hinted above, we find reason, proportion, and symmetry in the art of this age. Its gardens were formal, arranged in geometric patterns to demonstrate man's control of nature. Its music would evolve from the heavily ornamented Baroque to the clear rationality of sonata form. Great poets like Pope, Dryden, and later Samuel Johnson also relied on classical forms. They translated Homer and Virgil. They wrote in traditional forms like odes, pastorals, epics, mock epics, and above all, verse satire. It was a great age for satire.

Take for example Pope's *Essay on Man*, which I think reads like an 18<sup>th</sup>-century garden looks:

Know then thyself, presume not God to scan;  
The proper study of mankind is Man.  
Placed on this isthmus of a middle state,  
A being darkly wise, and rudely great:  
With too much knowledge for the skeptic side  
With too much weakness for the Stoic's pride,  
He hangs between; in doubt to act, or rest.  
In doubt to deem himself a god, or beast;  
In doubt his mind or body to prefer,  
Born but to die, and reasoning but to err;  
Alike in ignorance, his reason such,  
Whether he thinks too little, or too much:  
Chaos of thought and passion, all confused;  
Still by himself abused, or disabused;  
Created half to rise, and half to fall;  
Great lord of all things, yet a prey to all;  
Sole judge of truth, in endless error hurled:  
The glory, jest, and riddle of the world!

On the one hand, this is a poem that seems to be saying, "But humans aren't really very rational. We've got to be careful that this reason may lead us into error." Yet its form—its evenly spaced and proportioned lines—are utterly a



product of an Age of Reason. It's all neatly trimmed, and I don't think you'll find a single strong emotion in the poem if you read the whole thing.

The point here is that this age at the end of the reign of Anne and the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century is one that still has one foot in the Middle Ages. Pope still thinks we're between the beasts and the angels, but the other foot is pointing very much in a modern direction.

This overall confidence in reason, science, and human capabilities (identified in this lecture), I think, identify these people as modern. I think they identify these people as our ancestors. In the last lecture of this course, we'll discuss that connection and my conviction that the contemporaries of Newton and Pope are our spiritual and philosophical forebearers, regardless of where our individual families may have come from.

# The Meaning of English History: 1485–1714

## Lecture 48

In 1733, [Voltaire] published ... *The Letters on England*. In this book, he tried to explain to his countrymen religious toleration, the English Constitution, the political theories of John Locke, the scientific theories of Sir Isaac Newton, and the inoculation for the smallpox. This book is now largely forgotten today, but it's often credited with starting the European Enlightenment and so planting the seeds that would flower in the French Revolution. Of course, this all started in England.

**T**he society described in the preceding lectures had many problems. Even at the end of the period, as the Walpolean political stability reigned, clearly, that stability was built on great religious, social, and economic inequalities. This was a society in which the haves were far outnumbered by the have-nots, the wealthy minority lived in constant fear that the poor majority would rise up and take away their material wealth and status, and that majority was perfectly happy to exploit that fear to secure concessions from the minority. All of this should raise a question: If these people could not engineer a just and equitable society, why study them?

The first reason to study England and its people under the Tudors and Stuarts will, I hope, have been obvious by now: This is a great story. It is the story of how part of a small island, in 1485, poorer than contemporary Belgium, rose over 250 years to be the wealthiest and most powerful nation on earth and to produce a great culture, giving the world More's *Utopia*, Shakespeare's plays, Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Purcell's odes and anthems, Wren's buildings, Newton's science, and the King James Bible. It is the story of how a resourceful people survived repeated epidemics and famines; one failed invasion and two successful ones; two civil wars; a series of violent reformations and counter-reformations in religion; one social and two political revolutions; and face-offs with the two most powerful monarchs on earth, Philip II of Spain and Louis XIV of France. It is the story of how the English people stumbled into a constitutional monarchy and religious toleration that would evolve into the freest, most participatory state in Europe, if not yet a democracy.

It is a story filled with remarkable personalities—examples abound. Admittedly, most of those personalities were rich white men and a few rich white women. It should never be forgotten that the victories and advances noted above were built on the backs of Africans who were abducted from their homes, sold, enslaved, and worked to an early grave; Native Americans who were displaced and, sometimes, slaughtered in their own country; Catholic Irish who were displaced, marginalized, and reduced to penury in their own country; English Dissenters made second-class citizens and English Catholics made third-class citizens in *their* own country, even in the “tolerant” 18<sup>th</sup> century; and vast numbers of ordinary people who worked for little so that the upper 2 percent of the population might have leisure, including women, one-half of the population, whose voices were left unheard.

In many respects, Britain and its former colonies in North America are still dealing with the legacy of these injustices. But this course has tried to give equal attention to the English fight and the English fighters against those injustices. Although England under the Tudors and Stuarts can hardly be called a just or equitable society, it was a society that gave us many of the ideals, models, and tools with which to achieve one. Early modern English men and women taught their world that absolute monarchy was not the only viable form of government. They argued (for the first time since the Greeks) that rulers should be answerable to representative institutions and, ultimately, to the people. They asserted that subjects could not be imprisoned without charge (the right of *habeus corpus*), tried without access to a jury, or taxed without permission of their representatives. It was the people of England who, first in the early-modern world, won or extended widely the right to vote, the right to express political opinions in speech or print, and the right to sack a ruler who failed to govern them justly or effectively. These rights would eventually turn subjects of the Crown into English citizens.

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**Although England under the Tudors and Stuarts can hardly be called a just or equitable society, it was a society that gave us many of the ideals, models, and tools with which to achieve one.**

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It was the people of England who demonstrated to the early modern world that women could rule just as effectively as men. Admittedly, they came later to the idea of religious toleration than the Dutch and the Poles. But far more than any other contemporary European society, English men and women under the Tudors and Stuarts proved that social class was not immutable, that intelligence, ambition, and ability could lead to a career, a fortune, or a monument in Westminster Abbey. If it should never be forgotten that English men and women perpetrated great crimes against humanity, then it should equally be remembered that many of them died or suffered fighting for and over the ideals with which to right them.

When Americans took up arms against George III in 1775, they did so in defense of these English ideals. Admittedly, these ideals were only partially or barely realized in 1714, or 1775, or even today. But that does not reduce their nobility or the urgency of our task to make them real. Twice in the past century, Americans have gone to war to defend those ideals—the real inheritance of England under the Tudors and Stuarts. ■

### Suggested Reading

Bucholz and Key, *Early Modern England*, conclusion: epilogue.

### Questions to Consider

1. Why is it important to remember the failings and injustices of English history? To what extent should that memory play a role in discussions of current problems around the world?
2. In your view, should Americans study English history? Does it have any greater claim on our attention than other European or world histories?

# The Meaning of English History: 1485–1714

## Lecture 48—Transcript

In the last lecture, the English people appear to have achieved political stability, economic prosperity, and the most equitable society in Europe by 1714, but as we've seen, this came at the expense of peoples outside of England who had yet to taste the benefits of English liberty and prosperity.

This lecture ends the course with a few more words about the significance of those developments and the whole of English history under the Tudors and Stuarts, particularly for Americans in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It will argue that by 1714, the English people had not only achieved a degree of material comfort, but had pioneered many of the ideas and attitudes that we carry around as moderns and for which we fought in the American Revolution and every war since.

These shared ideals do not absolve the people we've studied of their many failings, anymore than they absolve us of ours, but I'll argue that they have provided the tools with which they, those they failed, and we, their intellectual descendants, could fight for a better, more just society on both sides of the Atlantic.

The society described in the preceding lectures had many problems. Even at the end of our period, as the Walpolean political stability reigned, it should be clear that that stability was built upon great inequalities in politics, religion, economic realities, and social relations.

As we saw in Lecture Forty-Six, this was a society in which the have-nots still far outnumbered the haves and in which most of the efforts of 98 percent of the people seemed geared to providing a leisurely and fulfilling life for the blessed two percent at the top. That wealthy two percent nevertheless lived in constant fear that the poor majority would rise up and take away their material wealth and status, and that majority was perfectly happy to exploit that fear to secure concessions from the minority. In addition, even their relative prosperity was to some extent built upon the enslavement of Africans, the expulsion from their lands of Native Americans, the oppression of the Catholic Irish, and a system in which every person lorded it over his or

her social inferior, no matter how few, and in which every man lorded it over every woman of comparable rank.

No wonder that Henry Fielding defined the word “nobody” in 1752 as, “All the people in Great Britain except about 1,200.” Which should raise a question: If, after all the sound and fury, constitutional arguments, wars, and rebellions of the Tudor and Stuart centuries, they couldn’t engineer a just and equitable society, what have we been doing for these 48 lectures? Why should we care about these people? Why should we study them? What do they have to tell us, struggling with our own issues of justice and equity, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? Is this not, as some critics have alleged, ultimately a story of dead white men and a few dead white women who got to live nice lives off of the sweat of others and who sought only their own advantage?

Whether or not you feel those questions are fair and interesting, every historian of England has to confront them. That confrontation is especially pressing if the historian in question happens to be an American. What am I doing studying these people? What am I doing studying somebody else’s history? How can I justify telling somebody else’s story? Needless to say, over the past 20 years, I’ve had to come up with a few answers, and I’m going to share them with you today.

The first reason to study England and its people—from the Tudors to the Stuarts—remains what it always was and what should by now be obvious: This is a great story, as if you need reminding. It’s the story of how part of a small island, in 1485, poorer than contemporary Belgium and less powerful than contemporary Denmark, rose over 250 years to be the wealthiest and most powerful nation on earth. It’s the story of how it produced a great culture, giving the world More’s *Utopia*, Shakespeare’s plays, Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, Purcell’s odes and anthems, Wren’s buildings, Newton’s science, the King James Bible, and arguably its greatest city, London. (You thought I was going to say Basingstoke, didn’t you?)

It also produced such universally loved institutions as the pub, the coffee house, the club, stage actresses, the newspaper, a free press, and real ale. If these are all just names to you, you must really sample at least some of them.

Admittedly, many of these institutions existed to bring English men and women together who were otherwise very much apart. They existed to obscure the differences and lubricate the tensions of a society that was often quite tension-filled because of that strong hierarchy we talked about earlier. Still, they're positive things, and those of us who live in a society that needs an easing of its tension benefit from them.

Think of the English language itself and what a powerful tool it has been to enlighten or inspire. That became possible because in our period it evolved from prose like this: "Your Grace has grown in great choleric fashion whensoever you are contraried in that which you have conceived in your head" (guess what I do to students who write like that?)—to this: "I've tried him drunk, I've tried him sober. There's nothing in him." Or: "Know then thyself, presume not God to scan; the proper study of mankind is Man." Or this: "The raising or keeping of standing army within the kingdom in time of peace, unless it be with the consent of Parliament, is against the law." That's from the Declaration of Rights of 1689.

Read or listen to any great American political speech—Patrick Henry's "Give me liberty or give me death," Lincoln's "Gettysburg Address," or King's "I Have a Dream"—and you will see and hear the cadences and vocabulary of Shakespeare, the Book of Common Prayer, the King James Bible, the language of the Magna Carta, the English Common Law, and the great statutes of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

This is a story of how a resourceful people survived. They survived repeated epidemics and famines, one failed invasion and two successful ones, two civil wars, a series of violent reformations and counter-reformations in religion, and a social and two political revolutions. It's the story of how they faced down the two most powerful monarchs on earth: Philip II of Spain and Louis XIV of France. This is the story of how the English people stumbled into a constitutional monarchy, religious toleration, and the freest, most participatory society in Europe, if not quite a democracy.

In the 1720s, Francois Marie Arouet, better known as Voltaire, found himself exiled to England because he had written something critical of the kings of France. He couldn't stay in his own country. In England, he was

shocked to discover the relative openness of English life. He was shocked to discover that a merchant family could rise into the peerage, and that peers thought nothing of investing in trading voyages or mines or stocks, often in partnership with regular merchants. A French aristocrat would think that beneath him.

He was shocked that anybody could frequent a coffee house and hobnob with a duke. He was shocked that, “A man is by no means exempt from paying certain taxes here simply because he is a noble or because he is a priest.” He was shocked that the press could satirize the prime minister as Bob Booty or the Bribe-master-General—admittedly, at some risk, as we indicated in the last lecture. He was shocked that ordinary people could protest the price of grain without facing the noose. Of course, we all know that they might face it if they actually stole some. They could complain of their landlords, their MPs or the king discreetly without ruining their lives.

Above all, he saw that English law applied to everyone equally. “You will hear nothing here about high, middle, or low justice, or of the right to hunt over the land of a citizen who has no right to fire a shot in his own field.” You couldn’t do it. Somebody’s property was their property, whether they were the poorest man in the kingdom and you were the wealthiest.

In 1733, he published all of this—his findings—in *The Letters on England*. In this book, he tried to explain to his countrymen religious toleration, the English Constitution, the political theories of John Locke, the scientific theories of Sir Isaac Newton, and the inoculation for the smallpox. This book is now largely forgotten today, but it’s often credited with starting the European Enlightenment and so planting the seeds that would flower in the French Revolution. Of course, this all started in England.

This is a story filled with remarkable personalities: Thomas More, “[Dying] the king’s good servant, but God’s first.” Elizabeth, rallying her troops against the Spanish Empire with, “the heart and stomach of a king.” James I telling Parliament that, “I will not be content that my power be disputed upon.” Sir Jacob Astley at Edgehill begging his Lord, “Not to forget me if I forget thee. March on, boys.” Matthew Prior rating the monuments of



his master's actions over those of the Sun King. Or Sir Robert Walpole, flourishing a Norfolk apple to deflect criticism of his policies in Parliament.

For many viewers and listeners of these tapes, it will be these great moments that most enliven the story and that you will probably most remember, if you remember anything. For me, however, the real meaning of this story is not to be found in the words and experiences of the rich men and women who ran the place, but in those of the countless ordinary people who didn't leave us their names, but who struggled to survive and prosper, and who along the way made of England—under the Tudors and Stuarts—something greater than it had been in 1485.

The real meaning of this story, for Americans especially, is to be found not in this royal throne of kings, or even in the heroism of Bishop Latimer, “lighting a candle by God's grace in England as shall never be put out.” I find it in Parliament telling the king, “We most truly avouch that our privileges and liberties are our rights and due inheritance, no less than our very lands and goods.” And in Edward Cook, MP, asserting, “We serve here for thousands and ten thousands,” and Denzil Holles as MP exclaiming, “Zounds! You shall sit as long as this House pleases.”

Above all, the meaning is to be found in the words of ordinary people who never sat in Parliament: that unknown complainer who said, “There are too many gentlemen in England by 500.” The recorder of Taunton, who stood up to one of Buckingham's captains: “Every man knows there's no law for this (billeting soldiers). We know our houses are our castles.” The New Model Army, an army of citizen soldiers, who claimed that they served, “In the defense of our own and the people's just rights and liberties.”

Of course, there's my favorite, Colonel Rainsborough, asserting when John Locke was only a little boy that: “The poorest he that is in England has a life to live as the greatest he. Therefore, every man that is to live under a government ought first by his own consent to put himself under that government.”

There also was the anonymous toaster to, “Our sovereign lord, the people.”

I suppose that if I were going to sneak in one monarch, it would be Queen Anne at the end of her reign thinking of the good of her people. In so doing, all of these people remind us that English history is as much about the ruled as it is about the rulers. Perhaps the most quotable of those rulers was Oliver Cromwell. This course is ultimately less about the Cromwell who wrote, “God made them as stubble to our swords,” and certainly not the one who thought the massacres of Drogheda and Wexford:

“A righteous judgment of God,” but rather the one who said, “Relieve the oppressed, hear the groans of the poor prisoners, be pleased to reform the abuses of the professions, and if there be any that makes many poor to make a few rich, that suits not a commonwealth.”

Those words ring as true today as they did then.

You may have signed up for this course for kings and queens, and I hope that I haven’t disappointed you. Its real meaning, however—the meaning of English history for Americans and for all people, I think—is that old platonic struggle to build a commonwealth—to build a just state. That struggle had many setbacks. It’s still not done.

As I’ve been at pains to point out, it should never be forgotten that the victories and advances that we’ve been talking about all through this course were built on the backs of Africans, who were abducted, sold, enslaved, and worked to an early grave; Native Americans, who were displaced and sometimes slaughtered in their own country; Catholic Irish, who were displaced, marginalized, and reduced to penury in their own country; English Dissenters, made into second-class citizens, and English Catholics, made into third-class citizens in their own country, even in the tolerant 18<sup>th</sup> century; vast numbers of ordinary people who worked for little so that the upper two percent might have leisure; and women, one half of the population, whose voices were left unheard. Britain and its former colonies in North America are still dealing with the legacy of these injustices.

This course has equally tried to be about the English fight and the English fighters against those injustices. While England under the Tudors and Stuarts can hardly be called a just or equitable society, it was a society that gave us

many of the ideals, models, and tools with which to achieve one. It's that common inheritance—more than anything else—that explains this famous vaunted special relationship we have for each other.

After all, Early-modern English men and women taught the world that absolute monarchy was not the only viable form of government. At least they taught their own early-modern world that. They argued for the first time since the Greeks that rulers should be answerable to the people they ruled through their representative institutions. They asserted that citizens could not be imprisoned without charge (the right of *habeas corpus*); that they could not be tried without access to a jury; that they couldn't be taxed without the permission of their representatives; and that they couldn't be subject to martial law or forced to billet soldiers.

It was the people of England who first in the Early-modern world won, or extended widely, the right to vote, the right to express political opinions in speech or print, and the right to sack a ruler who failed to govern them justly or effectively.

The rest of Europe thought that they were nuts. England was thought to be the sick man of Europe in the 17<sup>th</sup> century; it was really Spain. England was thought to be this collection of crazies who couldn't be ruled.

When Early-modern English people spoke of the rights of an Englishman, they knew that no similar phrase existed anywhere else in Europe. Try it out: “the rights of a Frenchman,” “the rights of a Russian.” You couldn't say that in the 17<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.

It was moreover the people of England who demonstrated to the Early-modern world that women could rule just as effectively as men. Indeed, it could be argued that the most able and successful rulers in this course—the most able and successful rulers in Britain's history—have been women. In contrast, Europe would actually go to war in 1740 (the War of the Austrian Succession) because a woman, Maria Theresa, had the temerity to inherit the Austrian throne.

Admittedly, Early-modern English men and women came later to the idea of religious toleration than the Dutch or the Poles. Even when they did, it was a limited toleration within a Protestant framework, but eventually—gradually—after the horrors of the civil war, they did reject persecution and zealotry and that rejection would work a quiet revolution of tolerance in the countryside. Let us not forget that in America, English men and women were constructing a society made up of all shades of religious opinion.

Above all, far more than any other contemporary European society, English men and women under the Tudors and the Stuarts proved that social class was not immutable. Intelligence, ambition, and ability could lead to a career, fortune, or burial in Westminster Abbey. Among those in this course who achieved greatness, or at least status, from humble backgrounds: Cardinal Wolsey, Thomas Cromwell, William Shakespeare, Oliver Cromwell, Samuel Pepys, Abigail Masham (who rose into the peerage), and a lot of those artists who are making a living and sometimes achieving knighthoods in the England of the late 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.

If it should never be forgotten that English men and women perpetrated great crimes against humanity under the Tudors and Stuarts, then it should equally be remembered that many of them died or suffered fighting for and over the ideals with which to right those crimes.

When Americans took up arms against George III in 1775, they did so in defense of these English ideals. Admittedly, those ideals were only partially or barely realized in 1714 or 1775—or even today. It would be many years before they positively affected most people's lives, either there or here. The slave trade wasn't outlawed in the British Empire until 1807. Catholics and Dissenters were not freed from the prohibitions of the Test Act until 1830. The middle class didn't get the vote until the Reform Act of 1832, the working class until the 1880s, and women on both sides of the Atlantic until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In Britain, it could be argued that the commonwealth men's and Levellers' most cherished ideals for a state that promoted the welfare of the people were not implemented until after World War II. In America, it was maybe not

until President Johnson's Great Society programs of the 1960s. We all know that both have been under siege ever since.

Of course, Britain has spent most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century working out the logic of the ideas of men like John Locke in finally and grudgingly recognizing the independence of the Republic of Ireland in 1937, India in 1947, and most of the rest of the British Empire thereafter.

There is an irony here. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the British Empire was at its height, Cecil Rhodes founded the Rhodes scholarship to educate the leaders of colonial societies and America at Oxford. His idea was that there at Oxford—at the mother of all English-speaking universities—these young men (and later women) would come to appreciate the blessings of the English Constitution, the English legal tradition, English culture, and therefore the blessings of being a part of the British Empire, by learning the story that we have just told.

In fact, most of that did happen. At Oxford, these young men and women studied the Magna Carta; the development of Parliament; the British Civil Wars; the Glorious Revolution; the English Constitutional tradition; and the writings of Thomas More, William Shakespeare, and John Locke. You know what they concluded from all that study? That they and their people wanted the same degree of self-government, individual rights, tolerance, democracy, liberty, and equality to which every Early-modern English man and woman aspired, even if they never really got there.

As you know, it hasn't always quite worked out that way in Africa, Asia, or any of the former British colonies, but that does nothing to discredit the nobility of these ideals.

Finally, there's the country that first shirked its British loyalties: the United States. The great 19<sup>th</sup>-century British political commentator, Walter Bagett, referred to us as, "Our (that is Britain's) nearest national kindred." It's about the nicest thing he actually said about us. Indeed, as you all know, our original 13 states began as Crown colonies. When they rebelled against King George III, they claimed that they were doing so in defense of English liberties, specifically the martial law and billeting provisions of the

Petition of Rights of 1628, the free trade within the empire represented by the Navigation Acts, and above all, the principle defended throughout this course and finally enshrined in the English Declaration of Rights: that an Englishman could not be taxed without his permission.

As Bernard Bailyn and others have shown, revolutionary pamphleteers cited in their defense Francis Bacon, Edward Cooke, John Milton's political writing, Algernon Sidney, and, of course, John Locke endlessly. All of those writings were forged in the crucible of the political struggles that we've been talking about in this course—the political struggles of Stuart England.

When in 1768, British troops arrived in Boston, the Boston town meeting reacted in language that would have been familiar to any 17<sup>th</sup>-century Parliamentarian. Here's what they said: "The raising or keeping a standing army within the kingdom in time of peace, unless it be with the consent of Parliament, is against the law." Sound familiar? It's a direct lift from a quote I read earlier from the Declaration of Rights of 1689. The colonists were going back to that English Constitutional tradition, and in this case, the writings of John, Lord Somers, to make their case to an English king.

As you know, the United States won its independence in part because the British Empire was overextended in the 1770s and 1780s, but also in part because many Englishmen, particularly most of the Whig party in Parliament in those years, agreed with us.

In the midst of that struggle, we embraced a Declaration of Independence, propounded on the Leveller and Lockian principles that all men should have a say in putting themselves under a government, and that government exists to protect the life, liberty, and property of its citizens. I know that Jefferson obfuscated this, but make no mistake, those men in that convention were men of property. They further propounded that when government fails to do so, as in 1688, the people have a just right of revolt.

Above all, it was Jefferson's genius to summarize and state outright that which was implied in all of this struggle for all of these principles: "All men are created equal." Subsequently, the founding fathers, as solid a group of English country gentlemen as you're ever going to find, sought to create a

constitution that embodied the strengths of the English one, while correcting what in their view were its defects.

Even that correction—no monarch, no state Church, decentralized power to the states, rights of free speech, freedom of religion, freedom of assembly, the right to bear arms, etc.—came out of distinctly English experiences that we’ve been describing all through this lecture course: the royal attempts at absolute rule versus the experiment with an English republic, for example, and the experience of religious persecution versus freedom during the civil wars. Freedom of assembly is a response to the 1715 Riot Act. We can owe the right to bear arms to the disarming of papists. In other words, the Constitution of the United States is an English history lesson.

As you know, we, like the English, have not always lived up to our English ideals. Our constitution denied personhood to two-fifths of slaves. We had to fight a bloody civil war and a more recent fight over civil rights to bring that ideal of all men being created equal closer to reality. I’m sure that you would agree that that fight is not over. Anyone who argues that English ideals have still not been achieved on either side of the Atlantic will get no argument from me, but that doesn’t reduce their nobility or the urgency of our task to make them real.

Twice in the past century, Americans have seen it as part of that task to go to war on the same side as Britain to defend those very ideals. They, I submit, are the real inheritance of England—from the Tudors to the Stuarts. They have meant enough to us to send our sons and daughters to fight and to die for them.

I began this course by quoting the most quotable of all English men, William Shakespeare. I would like to end it with perhaps his one great 20<sup>th</sup>-century rival. He was, like me, a historian of the reign of Queen Anne. Unlike me, he was a direct descendant of the Duke of Marlborough and the son of a cabinet minister, who rose to be prime minister and the winner of the Nobel Prize for literature.

What’s often forgotten about Winston Churchill is that he was, on his mother’s side, an American. His mother was the American heiress Jenny

Jerome. In the dark days of 1941, Sir Winston famously said to his mother's countrymen, "Give us the tools, and we will finish the job." The tools for which Churchill was asking in 1941, as you all know, were of course materiel: ships, airplanes, guns, and tanks with which to fight Hitler. But the job was to defend the political, social, and cultural inheritance of the Atlantic world.

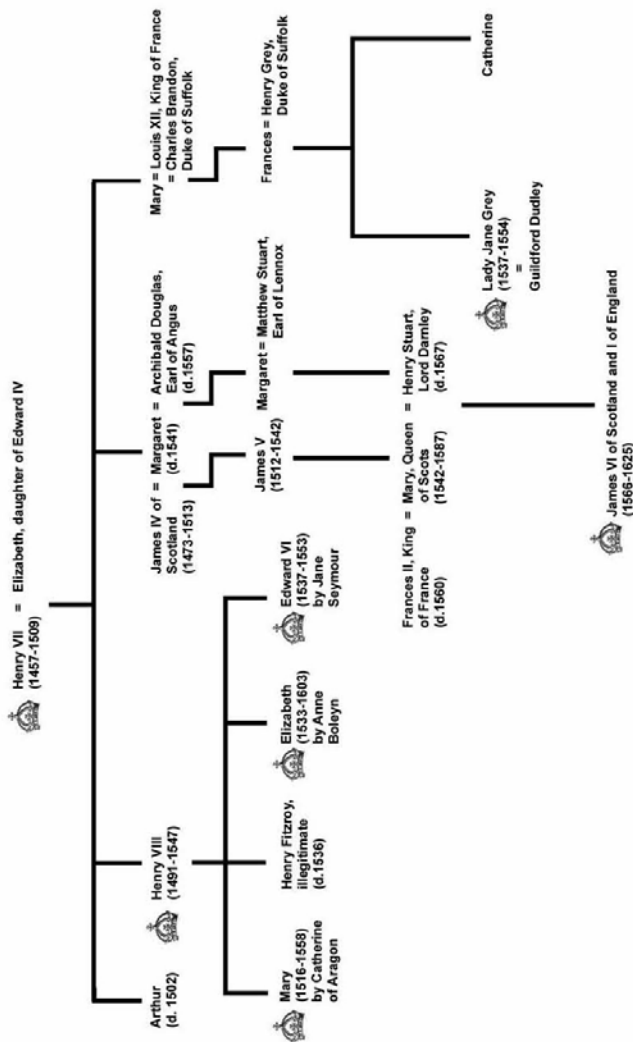
As this implies, the idealistic and conceptual tools and traditions that were necessary to achieve a just society, a democratic government, freedom of worship, and an open intellectual life—the inheritance that Churchill was trying to perpetuate against Hitler's legions—had long before been passed across the Atlantic in the opposite direction from England to America. They existed, admittedly, sometimes only in embryonic form—sometimes only in the minds of their originators, but in one place in 1714. They existed there thanks to the courage and persistence of the people of England—from the Tudors to the Stuarts.



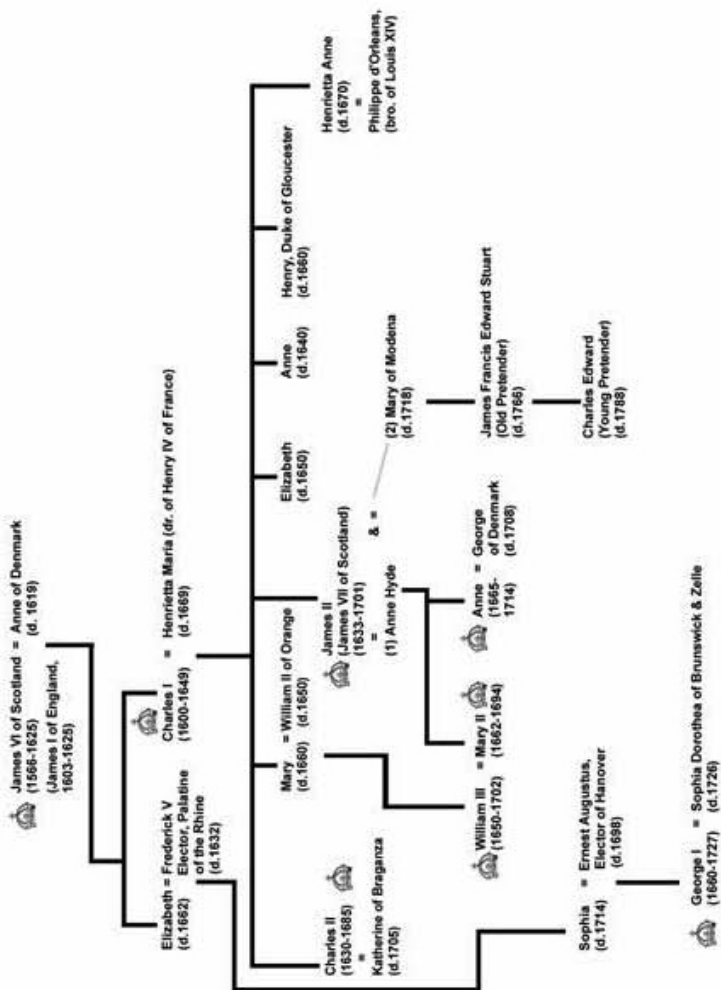
## Map



# The Tudors: 1485–1603



# The Stuarts: 1603–1714



## Timeline

*Note:* Rulers are listed in bold before the events that take place during their reigns. Events taking place in the same year are listed on separate lines unless they are related in some way. The outcomes of wars and battles are indicated as wins (W) or losses (L) from the point of view of the ruler of England at the time.

### **Ruling House: Plantagenets (1154–1399)**

**1326–1377**..... **Edward III**

1337–1453..... Hundred Years' War (with France) (L).

**1377–1399**..... **Richard II**

1397..... Richard II arrests Lords Appellants.

1399..... Richard II deposed.

### **Ruling House: Lancastrians (1399–1461)**

**1399–1413**..... **Henry IV**

1403..... Battle of Shrewsbury (W).

**1413–1422**..... **Henry V**

1415..... Battle of Agincourt (W).

1420..... Treaty of Troyes.

1422–1461..... Henry VI.

- 1450..... Cade’s Rebellion.
- 1453..... Hundred Years’ War ends (L).
- 1455–1485..... Wars of the Roses: Battle of St. Albans (L) (1455); Battles of Blore Heath (L) and Ludford Bridge (W) (1459); Battles of Northampton (L) and Wakefield (W) (1460); Battle of Towton Moor (L) (1461).
- 1461..... Henry VI deposed.

**Ruling House: Yorkists (1461–1485)**

- 1461–1483..... Edward IV**
- 1470..... Henry VI temporarily restored.
- 1470..... Battles of Barnet (W), Tewkesbury (W).
- 1483–1485..... Richard III**
- 1485..... Richard III deposed at Battle of Bosworth Field (L).

**Ruling House: Tudors (1485–1603)**

- 1485–1509..... Henry VII**
- 1487..... Simnel’s wRevolt; Battle of East Stoke (W).
- 1487, 1504..... Statute against Liveries.
- 1489..... Treaty of Medina del Campo.
- 1494..... Poyning’s Law.

- 1495–1497..... Warbeck Revolts (W).
- 1502..... Prince Arthur dies.
- 1509–1547..... Henry VIII**
- 1512–1514..... War with France (W).
- 1516..... More’s *Utopia*.
- 1521–1525..... War with France (L).
- 1526–1543..... Holbein’s major portraits.
- 1527..... Wolsey initiates divorce.
- 1529..... Papacy recalls divorce case to Rome;  
Wolsey falls.
- 1532..... Submission of the clergy.
- 1533..... Act in Restraint of Appeals; Cranmer  
finds for Henry in divorce case; Henry  
marries Anne Boleyn; Queen Anne  
gives birth to daughter, Elizabeth; Act  
of Succession.
- 1534..... Act of Supremacy; Treason Act.
- 1535..... Executions of More and Fisher.
- 1536–1537..... Pilgrimage of Grace.
- 1536..... Act of Union with Wales.
- 1536–1539..... Dissolution of the monasteries.

1536.....	First Poor Law.
1540.....	Cromwell falls.
1541.....	Henry VIII assumes crown of Ireland.
1542–1547.....	War with Scotland and France.
<b>1547–1553.....</b>	<b>Edward VI.</b>
1547–1550.....	Somerset named Lord Protector.
1549.....	Act of Uniformity; Western Rebellion (W).
1549–1551.....	Bad harvests.
1549.....	Kett’s Rebellion.
1550–1553.....	Northumberland’s ascendancy.
1552.....	Act of Uniformity.
1553.....	Edward wills the Crown to Lady Jane Grey.
<b>1553–1558.....</b>	<b>Mary I</b>
1553–1555.....	Catholicism reimposed.
1553–1554.....	Wyatt’s Rebellion.
1554.....	Mary weds Philip, King of Naples.
1555–1558.....	Burnings of Protestants.
1557–1559.....	War with France (L); loss of Calais.

1557–1558.....	Influenza epidemic.
<b>1558–1603.....</b>	<b>Elizabeth I</b>
1558–1603.....	Ascendancy of the Cecils.
1559.....	Treaty of Cateau-Cambrésis with France, Spain.
1560.....	Scottish Rebellion.
1559–1563.....	Establishment of the Church of England: Act of Supremacy; Act of Uniformity (1559); Treason Act; Thirty-Nine Articles (1563).
1564.....	Vestarian controversy.
1568.....	Hawkins raid; seizure of Spanish gold.
1569.....	Northern Revolt.
1570.....	Episcopal controversy.
1571.....	Ridolfi plot.
1575–1611.....	Byrd's major works.
1577–1580.....	Drake circumnavigates the globe.
1581.....	Act against Recusancy (expanded 1585).
1585.....	Elizabeth sends troops to the Netherlands.
1587.....	Execution of Mary, Queen of Scots.
1588.....	Spanish Armada (W).



- 1589..... Elizabeth sends troops to France.
- 1589–1613..... Shakespeare’s major plays.
- 1590, 1596..... Spenser’s *Faerie Queen*.
- 1594–1603..... O’Neill Rebellion in Ireland.
- 1595–1598..... Terrible harvests.
- 1600..... East India Company founded.
- 1601..... Monopolies controversy.
- 1601..... Essex Rebellion.

**Ruling House: Stuarts (1603–1714)**

- 1603–1625..... James I**
- 1604..... Goodwin’s case.
- 1604..... Treaty of London.
- 1605..... Gunpowder plot.
- 1606..... Bacon’s *Advancement of Learning*.
- 1607..... Virginia founded.
- 1611..... King James Bible.
- 1614–1628..... Ascendancy of Buckingham.
- 1622–1623..... Bad harvests.
- 1624–1630..... War with Spain (L).

<b>1625–1649.....</b>	<b>Charles I</b>
1627–1629.....	War with France (L).
1628.....	Petition of Right.
1628.....	Assassination of Buckingham.
1629–1641.....	Personal rule.
1633.....	Laud appointed Archbishop of Canterbury.
1636.....	King wins ship money case.
1638–1640.....	Bishops’ Wars (L): Battle of Newburn (L) (1640); Treaty of Ripon (1640).
1640.....	Short Parliament.
1640–1653.....	Long Parliament:
.....	Triennial Act; condemnation of personal rule, etc.; impeachment of Strafford (1641).
1641.....	Irish Rebellion.
1642–1649.....	English Civil Wars: Battle of Edgehill (W) (1642); Battle of Marston Moor (L) (1644); Battle of Naseby (L) (1645).
1647.....	Putney debates.
1648–1649.....	Bad harvests.
1649.....	Charles I beheaded; monarchy and House of Lords abolished.

## Interregnum (1649–1660)

### 1649–1653..... Commonwealth

1649..... Massacre at Drogheda.

1650..... Battle of Dunbar (W).

1651..... Battle of Worcester (W).

1651, 1660, 1663..... Navigation Acts.

1651..... Hobbes's *Leviathan*.

1652–1654..... First Anglo-Dutch War (W).

1653..... Barebones Parliament.

### 1653–1658..... Oliver Cromwell, Lord Protector

1653..... Instrument of Government.

1655..... Capture of Jamaica.

### 1658–1659..... Richard Cromwell, Lord Protector

1659–1660..... Monck's March on London.

### 1660–1685..... Charles II

1660..... Convention Parliament; Stuarts restored.

1660–1669..... Pepys keeps his *Diary*.

1661–1678..... Cavalier Parliament.

1661..... Corporation Act.

1662.....	Quaker Act; Act of Uniformity; Licensing Act.
1663.....	Royal Society founded.
1664.....	Conventicle Act.
1664–1668.....	Second Anglo-Dutch War (L).
1665.....	Plague in London.
1666.....	Fire of London.
1667.....	Milton’s <i>Paradise Lost</i> .
1670.....	Treaty of Dover.
1672.....	Declaration of Indulgence; Stop of the Exchequer.
1672–1674.....	Third Anglo-Dutch War (L).
1673.....	Test Act.
1673–1678.....	Danby’s ascendancy.
1678.....	Bunyan’s <i>Pilgrim’s Progress</i> .
1678–1694.....	Purcell’s major works.
1678–1682.....	Popish plot and Exclusion Crisis; Exclusion Parliaments; rise of Whig and Tory parties.
1681–1685.....	Tory revenge; remodeling of corporations.
1683.....	Rye House plot.

**1685–1688..... James II**

- 1685..... Monmouth's Rebellion; bloody assizes.
- 1686–1688..... Purge of Commissions of Peace, etc.
- 1687..... Newton's *Principia Mathematica*.
- 1687..... Declaration of Indulgence.
- 1688..... Birth of Prince of Wales;  
Glorious Revolution.

**1689–1702..... William III and Mary II (Mary dies in 1694)**

- 1689..... Toleration Act.
- 1689–1697..... Nine Years War (W): Battles of the Boyne (W), Beachy Head (L) (1690); Battle of La Hogue (W) (1692); Battle of Namur (W) (1695).
- 1690..... Locke's *Treatises of Government* and *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*.
- 1694..... Bank of England founded.
- 1697..... Treaty of Ryswick.
- 1701..... Act of Settlement.
- 1702–1714 ..... Anne.
- 1702–1710..... Ascendancy of Marlborough and Godolphin.

1702–1713..... War of Spanish Succession (W):  
Capture of Gibraltar (W); Battle  
of Blenheim (W) (1704); Battle  
of Ramillies (W) (1706); Battle  
of Almanza (L) (1707); Battle  
of Oudenarde (W) (1708).

1706..... Regency Act.

1707..... Act of Union with Scotland.

1710–1714..... Ascendancy of Harley (Oxford).

1712..... Pope's *Rape of the Lock*.

1713..... Treaty of Utrecht.

### **Ruling House: Hanoverians (1714–1901)**

**1714–1727..... George I**

1715..... Jacobite Revolt.

1716..... Septennial Act.

1720..... South Sea Bubble.

1720–1742..... Sir Robert Walpole, Prime Minister.

1720..... Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*.

1720–1767..... Hogarth's major works.

1726..... Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*.

**1727–1760..... George II**

## Glossary

**advowson:** right of the local landlord to choose the parish priest.

**Anglicans:** conservative or “High Church” members of the Church of England favoring Church government by bishops. Theologically, they were generally Arminians (see **Arminians**) or at least favorably disposed toward elaborate ritual and ceremony. The dominant strain of the Church of England after the Restoration; the term is anachronistic but useful for explaining tendencies up to that point.

**Appeals, Act in Restraint of, 1533:** parliamentary statute that forbade appeals in legal cases to jurisdictions beyond that of the King of England (such as Rome). The most important piece of legislation in the break from Rome, it not only made the divorce from Catherine of Aragon possible, but some historians believe that it established a modern conception of sovereignty in England.

**Arminians:** followers (or accused followers) of the Dutch theologian Jacob Arminius, who believed that humans could play a role in their own salvation by means of good works and efficacious rituals (theologically opposed by Calvinists; see **Calvinists**). They emphasized “the beauty of holiness” through elaborate church decor and ceremonial. Led by Archbishop Laud, Arminian clergy became influential under Charles I in the 1630s.

**asiento:** the right to supply African slaves to the Spanish colonies of the New World, secured for Britain in the Treaty of Utrecht of 1713 (see **Utrecht, Treaty of**).

**assizes, assize court:** court held twice a year in a major town as part of a regular circuit of assize judges with jurisdiction over the most serious felonies.

**attainder:** parliamentary statute that declared the party in question “attainted” of treason, without the formal procedure of a trial. Because those attainted lost their lives, titles, lands, and goods, whole families were ruined by this process.

**Babington Plot:** plot engineered by Anthony Babington, page to Mary, Queen of Scots, in 1586 to assassinate Elizabeth and place Mary on the throne. Discovered by Secretary Walsingham’s spy system, he waited to see if Mary would incriminate herself by approving the assassination. She did so, leading to her trial and execution.

**Baptists:** Protestants who believed that baptism should be left to adult choice. This idea was controversial because it would leave children unbaptized and vitiate any notion of a national church.

**Calvinists:** Protestant followers of John Calvin who believed that God has predestined all human beings to be saved or damned. Most members of the Church of England prior to 1630, and all Puritans (see **Puritans**), were Calvinists.

**Cavaliers:** cant name for supporters of the Royalist side during the Civil Wars.

**chantry:** a chapel, often a side-chapel in a church, set aside for prayers for the dead, often endowed by the deceased (see **purgatory**). Dissolved by the Crown in 1547.

**Clarendon Code:** popular name for the series of statutes passed by the Cavalier Parliament to establish the monopoly of the Church of England and outlaw dissent after the Restoration (see **Conventicle Act; Corporation Act; Five Mile Act; Quaker Act; Uniformity, Act of, 1662**). Its effect was to make Dissenters second-class citizens. Unfairly named for Lord Chancellor Clarendon who, though a staunch Anglican, was opposed to the persecution of Dissenters (see **Dissenters**).

**Conventicle Act 1664:** forbade meetings of more than five people for illegal (i.e. dissenting) worship on pain of fines and exile for a third offence.



**corporation:** the mayor, aldermen, and/or other governors of a city or borough, as laid out in its charter, granted by the Crown under the Great Seal of England.

**Corporation Act, 1662:** parliamentary statute that gave the king power to revoke city charters and change the composition of the corporation. Because the corporation ran the city in question and often voted for its members of Parliament, this was a way to ensure royal control of local government and the electoral process.

**Declarations of Indulgence, 1672, 1687:** royal proclamations suspending (see **suspending power**) the laws against both recusants (Catholics) and Dissenters (see **Dissenters**). Generally not supported by Dissenters because of their hostility to Catholics and fiercely opposed by the Anglican majority (see **Anglicans**).

**Deists:** those who, in the wake of the Scientific Revolution and Enlightenment, ceased to believe that God works actively to determine every occurrence in the world. Rather, they conceived of a “watchmaker God” who set the universe running according to unalterable natural laws. They tended to be suspicious of Scripture and dogma as infallible guides for human behavior, preferring the exercise of reason.

**demesne:** the part of a manor reserved for the landlord’s crops and other uses. It was farmed for him by his tenants.

**Diggers:** religious sect emerging out of the toleration following the Civil Wars. They were led by Gerald Winstanley in the period 1649–1650 and believed that the Bible did not sanction private property. They attempted to set up communes at St. George’s Hill, Surrey, and elsewhere, but a combination of government repression and local hostility broke the movement.

**dispensing power:** the customary, but increasingly controversial, right of English kings to dispense with the law in individual cases. Its use died out after the Glorious Revolution of 1688–1689.

**Dissenters:** those Protestants, usually theological Puritans, who rejected or were expelled from the Church of England after the passage of the Clarendon Code (see **Puritans, Clarendon Code**) following the Restoration. Dissenters were persecuted under the code until the passage of the Toleration Act in 1689, after which Dissenters who accepted the Trinity could worship openly if they kept the doors of their meeting houses unlocked.

**enclosure:** the process whereby landowners ceased arable (crop) farming and turned their lands over to pastoral, usually sheep, farming. This process was highly controversial, because it was thought to involve not only the enclosing of land by fences, but the eviction of the tenant farmers who had worked it. In fact, historical research indicates that its motivations and effects varied so considerably from place to place as to defy generalization.

**Exclusion Crisis:** the crisis over the succession that occurred in 1678–1681 over whether James, Duke of York, a Catholic, should be allowed to succeed his brother Charles II. The crisis, which was borne of the supposed discovery of a popish plot (see **Popish Plot**), precipitated three elections and led to the rise of the first two political parties in England. Whigs (see **Whigs**) opposed the duke's succession, proposing that Parliament name a Protestant instead; Tories (see **Tories**) favored it.

**Five Mile Act, 1665:** parliamentary statute barring any non-conforming minister from coming within five miles of a town in which he had served, unless he swore an oath renouncing rebellion.

**forced loan:** the practice of extorting money from English subjects, occasionally resorted to by the Tudors and, most notoriously, by Charles I.

**grammar school:** an endowed primary school with a classical curriculum, usually patronized by the middling orders.

**Gunpowder Plot:** Catholic plot organized in 1605 by Robert Catesby to blow up King James I and both Houses of Parliament at the state opening on 5 November by detonating barrels of gunpowder stored in the basement of the House of Lords. The plot was uncovered, and one of the conspirators,

Guy Fawkes, caught red-handed with the explosives the night before. The conspirators were executed and anti-Catholic legislation was toughened.

**heretic:** one who publicly denies principal doctrines of the established Church. The Act for Burning Heretics of 1401 decreed burning at the stake, most famously, for Protestant “heretics” under Mary.

**Independents:** those who, during and after the Civil Wars, believed that individual congregations should be allowed to decide on forms of worship and discipline within a loose national church. They generally favored a more aggressive war strategy during the Civil Wars and more radical solutions to social problems afterward. Eventually, they became known as Congregationalists.

**Jacobites:** supporters of the exiled King James II and his son, the titular James III, known to his opponents as the Pretender. Jacobite rebellions in 1715 and 1745 failed to restore the Catholic Stuarts.

**Junto:** from the Spanish *junta*, the group of five Whig politicians who acted in concert to lead the party and, often, the government between 1690 and 1715: Thomas, Lord Wharton; John, Lord Somers; Charles Montagu, later Earl of Halifax; Edward Russell, Earl of Orford; and Charles Spencer, later Earl of Sunderland.

**Justice of the Peace (J.P.):** an unpaid officer of the Crown in the localities, usually a gentleman, who acted as a magistrate, sitting in judgment over (usually) non-capital felonies, regulating markets and prices, maintaining roads, and supervising the Poor Law, among many other responsibilities. The mainstay of county government.

**Kett’s Rebellion:** rebellion led by Robert Kett in East Anglia in 1549 in response to hard economic times. The rebels demanded lower rents and entry fines, the inviolability of common lands, and a greater say in the selection of local officials. After the Duke of Somerset hesitated, its ruthless suppression by the Earl of Warwick helped catapult him to power.

**Latitudinarians:** early 18<sup>th</sup>-century churchmen, many of them Whig bishops, who sought an inclusive Church of England accommodating a variety of beliefs, including those consistent with reason and the new science.

**Levellers:** radical members of the army from 1647 who followed the ideas of John Lilburne and others demanding universal manhood suffrage, law reform, and “the sovereignty of the people.” A Leveller constitution, the Agreement of the People, was debated at Putney in 1647, but the movement was eventually suppressed by the Commonwealth.

**Long Parliament.** The Parliament summoned in the autumn of 1640, which sat in one form or another from the spring of 1641 to December 1648. At that time, its more moderate members were purged to form the Rump Parliament, which governed the Commonwealth until 1653 (see **Pride’s Purge, Rump Parliament**). First the Rump, then the whole of the Long Parliament were recalled during the period of instability before the Restoration, 1659–1660.

**Lords Lieutenant:** from the late Tudor period on, unpaid government officials, usually the most prominent peer in each county. His duty was to maintain order, keep an eye out for disaffection, and raise the militia when called on.

**manor:** the estate of a landlord, usually originally held by feudal tenure.

**National Covenant:** the agreement signed in 1638 by the leaders of Scottish society to defend Presbyterian Church government and its Calvinist theology against the Anglicizing tendencies of Charles I (see **Presbyterians**).

**Navigation Acts, 1651, 1660, 1663:** parliamentary legislation requiring that goods shipped to and from the English colonies in America be transported in English vessels through English ports. This legislation ensured England’s commercial supremacy.

**Nonconformists:** see **Dissenters**.

**nonjurors:** Anglican clergymen who refused to take the oaths of allegiance to William III and Mary II.

**Northern Rebellion:** revolt in 1569 that started out as a plot by the Duke of Norfolk to wed Mary, Queen of Scots, and replace William Cecil in Elizabeth's councils. When he hesitated, the Earls of Northumberland and Westmorland raised the north for Catholicism and marched south to Durham. The rebellion lost steam and was suppressed brutally.

**occasional conformity:** the practice by office-holding Dissenters of receiving communion at Anglican services in order to qualify under the Test Act (see **Dissenters, Test Act**). The Tories attempted legislation to ban the practice repeatedly under Anne (see **Tories**). They succeeded in securing a statute in 1711, only to see it repealed in 1719.

**Overbury Scandal:** the scandal that emerged in 1615 when it became apparent that two years before, Frances Howard, Countess of Somerset, had engineered the poisoning of Sir Thomas Overbury in the Tower of London to stop him from revealing embarrassing personal information about her divorce from the Earl of Essex and marriage to the current favorite, the Duke of Somerset. Both she and the duke fell from favor and were imprisoned but later pardoned.

**Pale:** the small area around Dublin in which direct English rule was effective in Ireland.

**Petition of Right, 1628:** parliamentary statute guaranteeing that no subject could be forced to pay a tax not voted by Parliament, imprisoned without charge, have soldiers billeted upon his house, or be subject to martial law. Charles I agreed to it with great reluctance in order to secure five new taxes.

**Pilgrimage of Grace:** Series of uprisings in the North in 1536–1537. Ostensibly in reaction to Henry VIII's innovations in religion, they also had economic and social causes. After promising concessions, the Henrician regime crushed the movement, executing its most prominent leader, Robert Aske, and about 180 rebels.

**Poor Laws, 1536, 1563, 1598, 1601, 1662:** series of parliamentary statutes designed to provide relief for the “deserving” poor, that is, those who could not work because of gender, age, or illness. The relief came out of taxes, the

Poor Rate, collected and distributed on a parish-by-parish basis. Some of these laws also had punitive provisions for “sturdy beggars,” that is, those who would not work. The law of 1662 allowed parishes to send itinerant poor back to their parishes of origin.

**Popish Plot:** fictitious Jesuit-Catholic plot to assassinate Charles II and raise the Catholic James, Duke of York to the throne with French help. The plot was manufactured by the de-frocked clergyman Titus Oates in the late summer of 1678 and led to widespread panic and anti-Catholic hysteria.

**Poyning’s Law, 1494:** named for Sir Edward Poyning, Lord Deputy of Ireland from 1494–1496, this statute of the Irish Parliament gave the English Privy Council the right to approve the summoning and legislation of the Irish Parliament. It further stated that statutes passed by the English Parliament applied to Ireland.

**Praemunire, Statutes of 1351, 1363:** parliamentary statutes that prohibited English subjects from acknowledging papal jurisdiction in certain cases.

**Presbyterians, Parliamentary Presbyterians:** theological Calvinists (see **Calvinists**) who embraced the form of Church government established in Scotland in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, whereby doctrine and practice were determined by a hierarchy of courts, culminating in a general assembly. Some Puritans found this system attractive, and Parliamentary Presbyterians wanted to apply it to England during and after the Civil Wars (see **Puritans**). They tended to be among the more conservative Puritans, favoring an accommodation with the king before 1649 and the restoration of the monarchy in 1660.

**Pride’s Purge:** In December 1648, Col. Thomas Pride, under orders from the Council of the Army, led troops who purged those remaining members of the Long Parliament who wished to continue negotiations with the king. Their removal paved the way for the trial and execution of Charles I by the remnant, known as the Rump Parliament (see **Rump Parliament**).

**proclamation:** royal decree (similar to the modern presidential executive order) that does not carry quite the same force as statute law.

**public schools:** original term for an endowed grammar school, has come to be associated with the wealthiest and most exclusive examples, such as Eton, Harrow, Rugby, and Winchester. Offering a curriculum emphasizing the Latin classics, they have long been famous as the training grounds for England's elite.

**purgatory:** Roman Catholic belief that, at death, souls who are not damned but not of sufficient perfection to merit heaven go to this place to become so. Catholics believe that the prayers of the faithful and the indulgences granted by the Church for good deeds in life are efficacious in reducing the amount of time a soul spends there. The sale of indulgences was one of the corrupt practices that aroused the indignation of Martin Luther and other Protestant reformers.

**Puritans:** Protestants who sought the continued reform of the Church of England after its establishment in 1559–1563. Puritans tended to be Calvinists, favoring plain church ritual consistent with scriptural injunction. Many, though not all, favored a Presbyterian form of church government (see **Presbyterians**). After a brief moment in the sun following the Civil Wars, they were driven out of the Church of England by the Clarendon Code (see **Clarendon Code**) and, thus, are properly known after the Restoration as Dissenters (see **Dissenters**).

**Quaker Act 1662:** made it illegal to refuse to plead in court (thus attacking the Quaker aversion to swearing oaths) and proscribed all meetings for worship outside the parish church of groups of five or more.

**Quakers:** religious sect emerging out of the toleration following the Civil Wars and led by George Fox. They believed that each human being possessed God's inner light in equal measure, regardless of gender or social rank. This inclined them, notoriously, to flout gender roles, deny deference to social superiors, refuse to swear oaths, and "quake" with their inner light at services. They were harshly suppressed at the Restoration.

**Ranters:** religious radicals emerging out of the toleration following the Civil Wars who believed that those in tune with God, who is pure good, can commit no sin. This was thought to give them license to perform all manner

of debauchery. Though much feared and reviled at the time, historians now debate their existence.

**Regency Act, 1706:** statute of Parliament guaranteeing that that body would continue to sit for six months after the death of Queen Anne, the realm administered by a Council of Regency to ensure the smooth accession of the Elector of Hanover as ruler of England, in keeping with the Act of Settlement. Its implementation in 1714 did precisely that.

**Ridolfi Plot:** plot engineered by Robert Ridolfi and supported by Phillip II and the pope in 1571 to overthrow Elizabeth and replace her with Mary, Queen of Scots. Discovered and foiled by the government.

**Roundheads:** cant name for supporters of the parliamentary side during the Civil Wars.

**Rump Parliament:** popular nickname for the radical remnant of the Long Parliament that continued to sit after Pride's Purge (see **Long Parliament, Pride's Purge**) in December 1648. The Rump was the effective legislature of the Commonwealth. It was dissolved by Cromwell in 1653 but briefly revived in 1659–1660 during the chaos leading to the Restoration.

**Ryswick, Treaty of, 1697:** treaty ending the Nine Years' War, by which Louis XIV recognized William III as the rightful King of England, Scotland, and Ireland; gave back European territory taken since 1678; and agreed to work out with William a partition of the Spanish Empire after the death of Carlos II.

**Settlement, Act of, 1701:** The statute that established the Hanoverian succession after William III and Queen Anne. It passed over dozens of Catholic claimants to award the succession to the Protestant descendants of James I's daughter, Elizabeth, namely, Sophia, Electress of Hanover, and her successor, Georg Ludwig. The act also restricted the power of the monarch to make war, leave the country, or employ members of Parliament in government office.



**sheriff:** originally the *shire reeve*, an unpaid officer of the Crown in the localities, responsible for collecting taxes, impaneling juries, and early in the period, raising the militia. Considered onerous and to be avoided if possible.

**ship money:** tax money collected in port cities to provide for the Royal Navy in times of national emergency. Charles I's extension to the whole country in the 1630s was financially lucrative but highly resented, leading to Hampden's case, which the king barely won. Condemned by the Long Parliament, 1641 (see **Long Parliament**).

**Solemn League and Covenant, 1643:** the agreement between the Scottish Covenanters (see **National Covenant**), on the one hand, and the English Parliamentarians, on the other, by which the former supplied their army in return for £30,000 a month and a promise to establish Presbyterianism in England (see **Presbyterians**). This agreement made possible the crushing parliamentary victory at Marston Moor.

**Star Chamber:** the Council acting as a court of law in matters involving riot and disorder. Its rules were few and its justice, quick, which made it popular with the Crown and litigants.

**suspending power:** the customary, if always controversial, right of English kings to suspend the operation of the laws in a time of national emergency. Condemned in the Declaration of Rights of 1689 and extinct thereafter.

**Test Acts 1673, 1678:** legislation passed by the Cavalier Parliament in response to the Declaration of Indulgence requiring all civil officeholders and members of either House of Parliament to take communion in the Church of England, to take oaths of supremacy and allegiance, and to repudiate transubstantiation annually. These requirements "flushed out" many Catholics in government but were less effective against Dissenters because of the practice of occasional conformity (see **Dissenters, occasional conformity**).

**Tories:** English political party that arose in response to the Exclusion Crisis of the 1680s (see **Exclusion Crisis**). The Tories began as a court party defending the hereditary succession in the person of James, Duke of York.

They favored the rights of the monarch, the Church of England, and the interests of landowners. During the 1690s, as they became associated with Jacobitism and lost power, the Tories became more of a country party. Their name derives from a cant term for Catholic-Irish brigands.

**Uniformity, Acts of 1549, 1552, 1559, 1662:** parliamentary statutes mandating attendance at church and the use of the English Book of Common Prayer.

**Union, Acts of 1536 with Wales, 1707 with Scotland:** parliamentary statutes uniting the country in question with England as one state. The 1707 Union created the state of Great Britain.

**Utrecht, Treaty of, 1713:** Treaty between Great Britain and France ending their hostilities in the War of the Spanish Succession. Britain acquired Gibraltar, Newfoundland, and Nova Scotia; territory in the Caribbean; the asiento (see **asiento**); Louis XIV's recognition of the Protestant succession; and the promise that the crowns of France and Spain would never be united.

**Whigs:** English political party that arose in response to the Exclusion Crisis of the 1680s (see **Exclusion Crisis**). The Whigs began as a country party demanding the exclusion of the Catholic James, Duke of York, from the throne; emphasizing the rights of Parliament and Dissenters; and championing a Protestant (pro-Dutch) foreign policy. In the 1690s, they became a party of government and grew less radical.

**Wyatt's Rebellion:** rebellion led in 1554 by Sir Thomas Wyatt against Mary's intended marriage to Phillip, King of Naples. Mary rallied the palace guards and remnants of Northumberland's army and beat back the rebels, many of whom were executed.

## Biographical Notes

*Note:* With one exception, monarchs designated with the Roman numeral I bore no such designation in life: King Charles I was King Charles, Elizabeth I was Queen Elizabeth, and so on. They acquired their distinguishing Roman numerals posthumously, when a second of that name succeeded. The exception was King James I, who was actually so designated in his proclamation of accession to distinguish his English title from his Scottish as James VI.

**Anne** (1664–1714): Queen of England, Scotland, and Ireland (1702–1714); pursued successfully the War of the Spanish Succession against France. Her attempt to maintain her freedom of action in the face of party partisanship was less successful, but her reign saw the Act of Union between England and Scotland, creating the state of Great Britain; maintenance of religious toleration for Dissenters; unprecedented British military success; and the expansion of the British territorial and commercial empire as a result of the Treaty of Utrecht (1713).

**Buckingham, Sir George Villiers, first Duke of** (1592–1628): Principal favorite of King James I and King Charles I from 1614–1628. As plain George Villiers, he rose on the strength of his good looks to power and influence, as well as the Earldom of Buckingham in 1617, the Marquisette in 1618, and the Dukedom in 1623. Thereafter, Buckingham monopolized office and wealth. His principal policy initiative was to engineer unsuccessful wars against Spain and France, beginning in 1624 and 1627, respectively. The House of Commons sought his impeachment in response to the ensuing military disasters. He was assassinated by John Felton in 1628.

**Burghley, Sir William Cecil, first Lord** (1520–1598): Statesman and principal advisor to Elizabeth I. He began his public career as secretary to Lord Protector Somerset and was subsequently secretary of state under Edward VI (1550–1553) and Elizabeth I (1558–1572). She created him Lord Burghley in 1571 and Lord Treasurer of England in the following year; he

served in the latter post until his death. Burghley was Queen Elizabeth's principal advisor and the leader of a vast clientage network at court and in the countryside. A brilliant administrator and resourceful financial manager, his advice was invariably cautious and prudent. At his death, both his power and his clients were inherited by his son, Robert Cecil.

**Charles I** (1600–1649): King of England, Scotland, and Ireland (1625–1649). His support for the Duke of Buckingham's failed foreign policy early in the reign, combined with his pro-Arminian religious policies and suspected Catholic sympathies, poisoned his relationship to Parliament. His attempt to rule without it, the Personal Rule of 1629–1640, saw a much-needed reform of the royal administration, but his financial exactions, never approved by Parliament, were very unpopular. His attempt to impose an Anglican-style liturgy on Presbyterian Scotland provoked the Bishops' Wars, provoking, in turn, the Long Parliament, which sought to limit his power. After neither king nor Parliament could agree on how to deal with the Irish Rebellion of 1641, civil war broke out. After some opening successes, the king lost the conflict by 1646. When, after much negotiation, it became clear that he would never agree to a limitation of his powers, he was tried by order of the Rump Parliament and executed in January 1649.

**Charles II** (1630–1685): King of England, Scotland, and Ireland (1660–1685), though committed Royalists began his reign at the death of his father in 1649. Prince Charles fought in the Civil Wars on the Royalist side, escaping to Europe in 1646, but he returned in 1650 to accept the Scots' acclamation as king. Defeated by Cromwell at the Battle of Worcester in 1651, he was forced to hide in a tree—"the royal oak"—and make his way incognito back to European exile. Restored in 1660, Charles II initially attempted to pursue a combination of absolutism, religious toleration, and friendship with France, culminating in the Treaty of Dover of 1670. But after the disaster of the Third Anglo-Dutch War, he employed the Earl of Danby to repair his relationship with the ruling elite by working to manage Parliament, embracing an Anglican religious policy, and pursuing, albeit fitfully, a Protestant (pro-Dutch) foreign policy. The climax of his reign was the Popish Plot and Exclusion Crisis, in which he coolly refused to accept that there was such a plot and, after some hesitation, continued to back his brother, James, Duke of York, as his heir, until a Tory reaction set in.

**Cromwell, Oliver** (1599–1658): Lord Protector of England, Scotland, and Ireland (1653–1658). Cromwell began life as an obscure gentleman from Huntingdonshire. Educated at the strongly Puritan Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, he proved himself a brilliant general of horse during the Civil Wars. By their end, he was the commander of the New Model Army and, arguably, the most important man in England. In 1649, he recaptured Ireland, gloating over the massacres at Drogheda and Wexford. In 1650–1651, he defeated the Covenanting and Royalist Scots, securing the control of the Commonwealth over the whole of the British Isles. However, he soon became disillusioned with the Rump Parliament and used the army to send them home in 1653. Named Lord Protector by the Instrument of Government later that same year, he gave England good government and an aggressive and successful foreign policy but also a more intrusive state and higher taxes than it had ever known previously. Though succeeded by his son, Richard, after his sudden death in 1658, his regime collapsed soon after.

**Cromwell, Thomas** (from 1540, first **Earl of Essex**; c. 1485–1540): English statesman who rose from obscure origins to become the architect of the Royal Supremacy. Cromwell's youth and training are shadowy, but he appears to have spent some time in Europe as a soldier and a merchant. After his return to England around 1514, he became secretary to Cardinal Wolsey, assuming the same position to the king, among many other offices, in 1534. As secretary, Cromwell planned and drafted much of the legislation that made possible the break from Rome, as well as major initiatives to increase royal power in frontier areas, such as Ireland, and in social welfare through the Poor Law of 1536. He also sought to improve the royal finances through the dissolution of the monasteries. As vicar-general for religious affairs he pursued policies that were often more Protestant than the king seems to have wished. Cromwell was a master of courtly politics, securing the elimination of Anne Boleyn in 1536, but the failure of the marriage he engineered between Henry and Anne of Cleves, combined with the machinations of Catholic courtiers, brought him to the block in 1540.

**Danby, Sir Thomas Osborne, Earl of** (from 1689, **Marquis of Carmarthen**; from 1694, **Duke of Leeds**; 1631–1712): Statesman and principal minister of Charles II in the mid-1670s. As Sir Thomas Osborne, Danby first came to Charles II's attention as Treasurer of the Navy from 1671–1673. Named

Lord Treasurer in 1673 and Earl of Danby in 1674 after the disasters of the Stop of the Exchequer, Declaration of Indulgence, and Third Anglo-Dutch War, it was his task to rebuild confidence in the Stuart regime by pursuing an Anglican and financially responsible domestic policy and a Protestant (pro-Dutch) foreign policy. To ensure parliamentary majorities, he attracted the loyalty of “court” members by giving them office, favors, payments from the secret service funds, and so on. Danby fell, and was imprisoned in the Tower, after revelations in 1678 that he had negotiated secretly with Louis XIV for a subsidy. Freed in 1684, he was one of the seven signers of the invitation to Prince William of Orange to invade England in 1688. He was Lord President of the Council from 1689–1699 and served as William III’s leading minister in the early 1690s.

**Edward VI** (1537–1553): King of England and Ireland (1547–1553), he was too young to direct policy on a day-to-day basis. The first part of his reign was dominated by his uncle, Edward Seymour, Duke of Somerset, named Lord Protector within days of Edward’s accession. Somerset pursued Protestantism at home and an aggressive foreign policy against Scotland, but fell in 1549 over his failure to deal effectively with the Western Rising and Kett’s Rebellion. He was replaced as leading minister by John Dudley, Duke of Northumberland, who pursued Protestantism more aggressively. Given that this would make Northumberland’s position untenable if the Catholic Mary succeeded, he persuaded the king [Edward] to divert the succession to the Protestant Lady Jane Grey as Edward’s health failed in the spring of 1553. The king died in July.

**Elizabeth I** (1533–1603): Queen of England and Ireland (1558–1603). As princess, Elizabeth had a checkered career, sometimes in royal favor, sometimes, especially under her Catholic sister Mary, well out of it and in some danger of her life. She preserved herself by avoiding all plots to put her on the throne prematurely. As queen, she inherited a great many problems from Mary. She solved them by pursuing extreme frugality and a moderately Protestant compromise on religion (the Settlement of 1559–1563) and by placating the great powers of Europe for as long as possible. This last was difficult, as Elizabeth found it in her interests to offer support to Scottish Presbyterian rebels against Mary, Queen of Scots, and, covertly, Dutch Calvinist rebels and English privateers against Phillip II of Spain. Spain

retaliated only when Elizabeth sent an army to the Netherlands in 1585 and executed her cousin Mary in 1587. The defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588 was only the beginning of a long war, the climax of which was the English suppression of the O'Neill Rebellion in Ireland in 1603. By then, Elizabeth's well-cultivated aura as Gloriana, the Virgin Queen, wedded to her adoring people, was wearing more than a little thin because of high taxes, poor harvests, and a sense that the reign had run its course.

**George I** (1660–1727): King of Great Britain and Ireland and Elector of Hanover (1714–1727). His family was placed in the succession to the British throne by the Act of Settlement of 1701. The Hanoverian claim having received the wholehearted support of the Whigs before his accession, George I employed them in office exclusively as king. In particular, he placed his affairs so fully into the hands of Sir Robert Walpole that the latter is considered the first real prime minister in British history.

**Henry VII** (1457–1509): King of England (1485–1509). As Henry Tudor, Earl of Richmond, he inherited a claim to the English throne from his mother, Margaret Beaufort. Acting on that claim in 1485, Henry defeated Richard III at the battle of Bosworth Field and seized the throne. He kept it by reducing the power of the greatest nobles; promoting trade; building alliances with France, Scotland, and Spain through threats of war or diplomatic marriage; and reforming the administration and finances of the Crown to a point where he no longer had to trouble Parliament for funds. This, in turn, meant that they would not trouble him.

**Henry VIII** (1491–1547): King of England (1509–1547) and of Ireland (1541–1547), he deployed his considerable intelligence and energy during the first 20 years of his reign on pleasure and wars with France, leaving the administration of the country to Thomas, Cardinal Wolsey. Wolsey fell in 1529 after failing to secure for Henry a papal divorce from his first wife, Catherine of Aragon, necessitated in Henry's eyes, by her failure to give him a male heir. Wolsey's replacement, Thomas Cromwell, made possible the divorce by making Henry supreme head of the Church of England in 1533–1536. In the process, they initiated the English Reformation and a virtual revolution in the Crown's relationship to its subjects. Henry was a popular monarch, despite the fact that he exploited, exhausted, or liquidated a series of wives,

ministers, and courtiers and the contents of the royal Treasury. Though a political and religious conservative, his constitutional and religious changes did much to propel England down the path of parliamentary sovereignty and Protestantism.

**James I** (1566–1625): King of England and Ireland (1603–1625) and, as James VI, of Scotland (1567–1625). James succeeded his mother, Mary, Queen of Scots, as ruler of Scotland after she was deposed by the Presbyterian nobility. Raised a somewhat reluctant Presbyterian, James grew up to be an effective ruler of Scotland, particularly good at balancing its various factions. He was also something of a scholar, writing in support of divine-right kingship. He succeeded Elizabeth I on the strength of his Tudor great-grandmother, Margaret. As King of England, James won peace with Spain and pursued a moderate religious policy, avoiding persecution of either Catholic or Puritan extremes when possible. He had more difficulty balancing English political factions and never quite figured out how to manage Parliament so as to supply the extravagance of his court. Increasingly lazy as he grew older, he turned his affairs over to his principal favorite, George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham. This explains the ill-advised resumption of hostilities with Spain begun in his last year on the throne.

**James II** (1633–1701): King of England and Ireland and, as James VII, Scotland (1685–1688). As a young man following the Civil Wars, James, Duke of York, escaped to the continent. There, in the service of the French king, and after the Restoration, as Lord High Admiral (1660–1673), he distinguished himself by his bravery. In 1678, after allegations of a popish plot to kill Charles II and place James on the throne, the Whigs organized, unsuccessfully, to try to ban him from it. As king, he proved a far-sighted administrator, but his major policy initiative, to grant both Catholics and Dissenters a toleration, was widely unpopular. In 1688, he was deposed by William of Orange and fled once more to France. The following year, he attempted to launch a second Restoration from Ireland, but following his defeat at the battle of the Boyne in July 1690, he left his former kingdoms for good. He lived out his days on the hospitality of Louis XIV.

**Laud, William** (1573–1645): Anglican churchman who rose to be Archbishop of Canterbury (1633–1645). Laud embraced an Arminian



theology, which emphasized hierarchy, the sanctity of the priesthood, and elaborate ritual. He became the scourge of Puritan clergy, using episcopal visitations and the Court of High Commission to promote uniformity of worship. He was impeached of high treason by the Long Parliament and beheaded during the Civil Wars.

**Marlborough, John Churchill, Duke of** (1650–1722): English statesman, Queen Anne’s captain general (1702–1711), and the greatest military leader of his day. He began life as plain John Churchill at the Restoration court, where he soon won the favor of James, Duke of York. As Lord Churchill, he distinguished himself with his effective leadership at the battle of Sedgemoor in 1685. He won the Earldom of Marlborough by defecting, with much of the English officer corps, to William of Orange during the Glorious Revolution of 1688–1689 but fell out of favor after being implicated in correspondence with the Jacobite court in 1692. Named to his Dukedom by Queen Anne in 1702, he led her forces during the War of the Spanish Succession to crushing victories at Blenheim (1704), Ramillies (1706), and Oudenarde (1708). He became estranged from Anne by her inclination toward peace and her refusal to confirm his position for life in 1709–1710. He was dismissed his command at the end of 1711, going into voluntary exile until the accession of George I in 1714. His declining health thereafter precluded a return to politics.

**Mary I** (1516–1558): Queen of England and Ireland (1553–1558). Educated to be a consort, not a queen; de-legitimized by her father, Henry VIII, in 1533; taken out of the succession by her brother, Edward VI, in 1553, Mary survived the attempted coup of Lady Jane Grey to succeed in July of that year. She precipitated another crisis, Wyatt’s Rebellion, in 1554 by choosing to marry Phillip, King of Naples, the future Phillip II of Spain. The rebellion failed, but the marriage proved unhappy: It never produced the heir that Mary so desperately wanted, but it did land her in a disastrous war with France that saw the loss of Calais. The major policy initiative of her reign, the restoration of Catholicism as the state church, failed, not so much because of the persecutions that earned her the sobriquet “Bloody Mary,” but because she had neither time on the throne nor an heir to continue her policies. In their absence, hers is generally considered the only failed Tudor reign.

**Mary II** (1662–1694): Queen of England, Scotland, and Ireland (1689–1694). The daughter of James, Duke of York (the future James II), Mary was raised a Protestant at the Restoration court. She was matched, in a diplomatic marriage, with William of Orange, Stadholder of the Netherlands, in 1677. In the Glorious Revolution of 1688–1689, she was offered the throne with William as king, in whom administrative power was vested. Serving as regent when he was out of the country on campaign, Mary was frequently urged by the Tories to exercise her power, but she remained loyally subordinate to her husband. Her importance to the regime was in giving it a face that was English, Anglican, charitable, fun-loving, and attractive. She was also important as a patroness of the arts and was much lamented at her sudden death from smallpox in December 1694.

**Mary, Queen of Scots** (1542–1587): Queen of Scotland (1542–1587). Mary ascended six days after her birth, at the death of her father, James V. A most eligible princess, Henry VIII and Lord Protector Somerset tried to neutralize their northern frontier by forcing her marriage to the future Edward VI. Instead, a Scottish government under Cardinal Beaton sent her to France in 1548. Ten years later, she married King Francis II. At his death in 1560, the Catholic queen returned to a Scotland gripped by Protestant reformation and rebellion. Her ability to work with the victorious Protestant nobility was compromised by her subsequent checkered marital history, first to the callow and cruel Lord Darnley in 1565, then to his murderer and her supposed kidnapper, the Earl of Bothwell, in 1567. She was deposed in favor of her son, James VI, in 1567 and forced to flee to England the following year. There, she was a focus for Catholic plots to assassinate or depose Elizabeth I, regarded by good Catholics as illegitimate. After explicitly agreeing to Elizabeth's murder in the Babington Plot, Mary was tried in 1586 and, after much prevarication on Elizabeth's part, executed in February 1587.

**Oxford, Robert Harley, first Earl of** (1661–1724): English statesman, architect of the Treaty of Utrecht. From a Dissenting and Roundhead background, Harley rose in the 1690s to be Speaker of the House of Commons. An effective parliamentary organizer, he led a contingent of country politicians who started out as Whigs, ended up as Tories, and virtually ran the country by the end of the reign of William III. Under Queen Anne, he served as Secretary of State from 1704–1708. In February 1708, as

Junto Whigs flooded into the administration, he staged an abortive coup to maintain a mixed ministry of Whigs and Tories. In apparent retirement, he secretly counseled Anne to restore such a ministry and was named a treasury commissioner in 1710, then Lord Treasurer and Earl of Oxford in 1711. His great achievement was the Treaty of Utrecht, negotiated, often secretly, over Whig opposition and Allied hostility. The treaty established Britain's maritime supremacy for a century, but it also cost him the votes of moderate Whigs and the confidence of the Protestant heir, Georg Ludwig of Hanover. Unable to maintain the queen's confidence in turn, he was dismissed in July 1714. Impeached for Utrecht in the next reign, he was acquitted and retired to one of the great book and manuscript collections in England, which later formed the basis for the British Museum.

**Walpole, Sir Robert** (from 1742, first Earl of Orford; 1676–1745): First and longest serving prime minister of Great Britain (1722–1742). Walpole served as Secretary at War (1708–1710), treasurer of the Navy (1710–1711), and a frequent Whig spokesman in the House of Commons under Queen Anne. Under George I, he served briefly in a ministry with Lords Stanhope and Sunderland, but broke with them in 1717. Restored to office in the wake of the financial scandal known as the South Sea Bubble (1720), Walpole maintained his hold on power for 20 years by embracing the Hanoverian Succession, the Anglican Church, pacifism, and low taxes; by exploiting government patronage to reward his followers; and by engaging in effective parliamentary oratory. He was accused by his opponents of corruption, but he is generally credited by historians with restoring a measure of political stability to the British state after the upheavals of the previous century. These interpretations are not mutually exclusive.

**William III** (1650–1702): King of England, Ireland, and (as William II), Scotland (1689–1702); (as William III) Prince of Orange (1650–1702); and Stadholder of the Netherlands (1672–1702). William was the only child of William II, Prince of Orange, and Mary, the daughter of Charles I. Chronically unhealthy but of exceptional intelligence, William was kept from power in the Netherlands by a republican faction during his youth. He was catapulted to the leadership of the Dutch Republic by Louis XIV's attempt to wipe it off the map in 1672. For the remainder of his life, he worked to build a Grand Alliance to stop the Sun King, an important stage

in that project being his marriage to Princess Mary of England in 1677. His great opportunity to take advantage of this match came in 1688 when he was invited to invade England. After extensive preparations, the invasion was a success and, on 13 February 1689, William was offered the English crown, jointly, with Mary, but with administrative power to be vested in him. The Glorious Revolution precipitated the Nine Years' War, in which he secured, first, Ireland by 1692, then a favorable peace with Louis through the Treaty of Ryswick in 1697. As William's reign ended, he was preparing a second war to stop Louis XIV from placing his grandson, Philippe, Duke of Anjou, on the Spanish throne and James II's son, Prince James, on the British thrones.

**Wolsey, Thomas** (c. 1472–1530): Cardinal (1515–1530), Archbishop of York (1514–1530), Lord Chancellor (1515–1529), papal legate (1518–1530), and Henry VIII's principal minister during the first half of the reign. After graduating from Oxford, Wolsey became a chaplain, first to the Archbishop of Canterbury (1501), then to Henry VII (1507). As Henry VIII's almoner (1509), he came to the king's attention by his logistical skill in support of his early French campaigns (1513–1514). Thereafter, the king delegated responsibility for both foreign and domestic policy to Wolsey. The Cardinal achieved some notable diplomatic successes, in particular the Treaty of London (1518) and the Field of the Cloth of Gold (1520), but he could not win for Henry parity with the King of France and Holy Roman Emperor. In domestic affairs, Wolsey used the power of Star Chamber to fight enclosure, illegal retaining, and riot and was famous as a fair judge to the poor. But his great wealth and power were highly resented at court. He fell in 1529 when he failed to obtain from the pope Henry's divorce from Catherine of Aragon. He was subsequently charged with treason but died on his way to London for trial.

## Bibliography

### Essential Reading

Bucholz, Robert, and Newton Key. *Early Modern England, 1485–1714: A Narrative History*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2003. A history of England under the Tudors and Stuarts written from an American point of view for the general reader. The lectures follow this text very closely. For alternative points of view, try Morrill, Brigden, Guy, Coward, or Kishlansky, below.

Cannon, J., ed. *The Oxford Companion to British History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997. The most comprehensive one-volume encyclopedia of British history. Invaluable for looking up individual topics.

Morrill, J., ed. *The Oxford Illustrated History of Tudor and Stuart Britain*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997. Organized thematically (and not always logically) rather than chronologically, this work presents the latest research in a series of essays by the leading scholars in the field. A good non-narrative alternative to Bucholz and Key.

Sharpe, J. A. *Early Modern England: A Social History, 1550–1760*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London: Longman, 1997. The most comprehensive and up-to-date synthesis of recent work in social history.

Tillyard, E.M.W. *The Elizabethan World Picture*. New York: Random House, 1941. A concise explanation of the Great Chain of Being and the Tudor worldview. Methodologically unsophisticated but gets the job done.

Wrightson, K. *English Society, 1580–1680*. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1982. Persuasive interpretation of what life was like for ordinary people; more engaging but less comprehensive than Sharpe.

## Supplementary Reading

### General Surveys of English History under the Tudors and/or Stuarts

Brigden, S. *New Worlds, Lost Worlds: The Rule of the Tudors, 1485–1603*. New York: Penguin, 2000. Recent, readily available, and persuasively written.

Coward, B. *The Stuart Age: England, 1603–1714*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London: Longman, 1994. A detailed survey, stronger on the period before 1680 than after.

Davies, C.S.L. *Peace, Print and Protestantism, 1459–1558*. London: Granada, 1977. A bit outdated but eminently readable and judicious.

Guy, J. *Tudor England*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988. The now-standard survey.

Hoppit, J. *A Land of Liberty?: England, 1689–1727*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000. Thorough, up to date, and useful on a variety of topics.

Kishlansky, M. *A Monarchy Transformed: Britain, 1603–1714*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1996. A beautifully written, concise history that gives the later Stuarts their due.

Lockyer, R. *The Early Stuarts: A Political History of England, 1603–1642*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London: Longman, 1999. Engagingly written but organized more topically than chronologically.

Williams, P. *The Later Tudors: England, 1547–1603*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995. Comprehensive, detailed, and judicious with well chosen quotes and anecdotes. Perfect for exploring individual topics in greater depth.

### Biographies

Baxter, S. B. *William III and the Defense of European Liberty, 1650–1702*. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1966. The standard biography, now in need of updating.

Carlton, C. *Charles I: The Personal Monarch*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London: Routledge, 1995. The best biography so far.

Chrimes, S. B. *Henry VII*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972; repr. 1977. The standard biography.

Coward, B. *Oliver Cromwell*. New York: Longman, 1991. A balanced reinterpretation of this controversial man.

Gregg, E. *Queen Anne*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001. The definitive biography; provides a good narrative of the reign.

Gwyn, P. *The King's Cardinal: The Rise and Fall of Thomas Wolsey*. London: Barrie and Jenkins, 1990. The best biography.

Haigh, C. *Elizabeth I*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London: Longman, 1998. A challenging reinterpretation that debunks many myths and avoids hero-worship.

Harris, F. *A Passion for Government: The Life of Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991. A brilliant political biography that addresses the situation of a woman of ability in a man's world.

Jones, J. R. *Marlborough*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993. The most recent biography.

Loades, D. M. *The Reign of Mary Tudor: Politics, Government, and Religion in England, 1553–1558*. New York: St. Martin's, 1979. The most balanced portrait.

Lockyer, R. *Buckingham, the Life and Political Career of George Villiers, First Duke of Buckingham, 1592–1628*. London: Longman, 1981. An important revision of received wisdom on Buckingham.

MacCaffrey, W. *Elizabeth I*. London: Edwin Arnold, 1993. A solid synthesis based on a lifetime of research.

Miller, J. *Charles II: A Biography*. London: Weidenfield and Nicolson, 1991. The best recent biography.

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Starkey, D. *Elizabeth: The Struggle for the Throne*. New York: Harper Collins, 2001. The first volume of what promises to be a stimulating reinterpretation.

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### **Political: Pre-Tudor (1400s–1485)**

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### **Political: Tudor**

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Fletcher, A., and D. MacCulloch. *Tudor Rebellions*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. London: Longman, 1997. The standard concise account.

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Williams, P. *The Tudor Regime*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979. Still the most perceptive explanation of how it all worked.

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Colley, L. *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707–1837*. London: Vintage, 1994. A classic, this book explains how the idea of “Britain” developed in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

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the Reformation through its explanation of changes in the calendar and holiday rituals.

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Smuts, R. M. *Culture and Power in England, 1585–1685*. New York: St. Martin's, 1999. A comprehensive analysis of the relationship between high culture and politics.

Starkey, D., ed. *The English Court: From the Wars of the Roses to the Civil War*. London: Longman, 1987. Argues for the central significance of the court before the Civil Wars.

Stone, L. *The Crisis of the Aristocracy, 1558–1641*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967. A classic. Although the overall interpretation of this book is no longer generally accepted, it remains the best account of what aristocratic life was like.

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Thompson, E. P. *Customs in Common: Studies in Traditional Popular Culture*. New York: The New Press, 1991. A provocative collection from the late dean of English social historians. The articles on patrician versus plebeian culture and riot are especially important.

Underdown, D. *Fire from Heaven: The Life of an English Town in the Seventeenth Century*. New York: Yale University Press, 1992. The most thorough and readable reconstruction of life in an English town during the upheavals of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

Wrightson, K. *Earthly Necessities: Economic Lives in Early Modern Britain*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000. A compelling synthesis by a leading English social historian.

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### **Ireland, Scotland, and Wales**

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Brown, K. M. *Kingdom or Province? Scotland and the Regal Union, 1603–1715*. New York: St. Martin's, 1992. A recent and challenging reinterpretation of the Union with Scotland.

Canny, N. *Making Ireland British, 1580–1650*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000. This book is by the leader in this field.

Ellis, S. G. *Ireland in the Age of the Tudors, 1447–1603: English Expansion and the End of Gaelic Rule*. London: Longman, 1998. The now-standard account.

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## Europe and Empire

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## Internet Resources

BBC. *A History of Britain*. [http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/programmes/hob/index\\_series1.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/programmes/hob/index_series1.shtml). British Broadcasting Corporation Web site; history to 1603.

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