

## **Puritanism: 1680-1700**

### **England**

In the early 1680s, the beginnings of a new era began to emerge and take much of Western Europe by storm: The Age of Enlightenment. The Glorious Revolution, the catalyst of which was the reign of Charles II and his successor, James II in England, was one of the major results of the beginning of this age of reason in England.

In 1685, James II of England assumed the throne after Charles II died. Charles II, who was surrounded by conspiracy theories throughout his life, confirmed the Protestant's Catholic paranoia by proclaiming Catholicism on his deathbed. Many in England and in Parliament were extremely concerned about the prospect of Charles II's younger brother, James II taking the throne because he was openly Catholic. Nevertheless, James II did become king of England upon the death of his older brother.

Immediately following his coronation, James II began appointing high-ranking Catholics to positions of power, which directly violated the law in place during that time that all Parliamentary members, lawmakers, and officials must also be members of the established Church of England. In fact, in 1687, James passed the Declaration of Indulgence, which stated that the penal laws against Roman Catholics and dissenters from the Church of England were to be suspended indefinitely. This order was to be read from every pulpit in England immediately following its passing. To make matters much worse, James II had a son and heir the very next year, meaning that a Catholic monarchy would be firmly in place for the foreseeable future. With that in mind, one bishop and six prominent politicians wrote to Protestant William of Orange, urging him to raise an army and come to England to redress their grievances.

William of Orange was both the nephew and son-in-law of James II and his wife, Mary, if James' son happened to die, was heir apparent to the English throne. However, complications arose because the Dutch Republic, of which William was Military Commander, was on the brink of war with France and there was a great possibility that James II would enter that very same war on the side of France, which made accepting the request of the English politicians a big risk, but the potential success had greater rewards, namely, that England would become a Dutch ally. Consequently, William of Orange accepted England's invitation and landed at Brixhamon November 5, 1688. He successfully overtook James' army, ultimately causing him to flee to France, which Parliament took as James abdicating the throne.

William and Mary of Orange were thus installed as the new Protestant rulers over England in February of 1689. This became known as the Glorious Revolution. Along with their rule, there came a Declaration of Rights, which established new constraints upon the authority of the monarchy and reaffirmed the stipulation that only Protestant which William III readily accepted in exchange for England's support with the war against France. The new English Constitution significantly weakened the power of the king and was heavily influenced by the enlightenment ideals of John Locke and other political philosophers of the age. At this point, England became a constitutional monarchy.

## **America**

In America, the ideas of the Enlightenment were prevalent, but during the late 1600s, there was nothing major that came from it and nothing really would result from it until the Revolutionary War. In that time before the Revolutionary War and the establishment of the United States, many came to America seeking religious freedom from the Church of England right before and during the English Civil War. These Puritans established their own Covenanted communities under English rule.

One prominent English establishment in 1681 was the Quaker colony of Pennsylvania and there *The Frame of Government of Pennsylvania* was written by William Penn. This document included many precursors to American setup of bicameral legislature and governance.

Though Charles II gave royal permission for colonies in the Americas to be established, his overwhelming authority and subsequent Catholic agenda was felt not only in England, but in the Puritan colonies as well, specifically in the Massachusetts Bay Colony. In an attempt to weaken the power of the Puritan church in Massachusetts, Charles II revoked their charter in 1684, lumping it in more largely with the bulk of New England.

One of the larger Puritan developments in America during this time was the meeting of the Reforming Synod of 1680 to discuss marked increasing faithlessness in the church, which resulted in a renewal of commitment to the faith and to the gospel, established the stipulation that one could not become a member of the church and take communion without first making a public profession of faith, and a further entreaty for the church to engage in discipline, including excommunication. Politically this synod also had an impact. The synod recommended that both church and state in the commonwealth should have scriptural warrant for any laws passed or decisions made. There was also a movement, resulting from this event, to unite the Congregational and Presbyterian churches into one denomination, structurally.

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