

The Trial of Charles I - III

Lead: The alliance of politics and religion proved a revolutionary formula for in England during the 1640s. For King Charles I it was deadly combination.

Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.

Content: Estranged from many in his Kingdom, desperate for new sources of money, and caught in a war of his own making in Scotland, Charles Stuart, King of the English and the Scots was forced to call

Parliament to meet, something he had put off for eleven years. When the members came to Westminster in the Spring of 1640 and then again in November, they forced upon Charles reforms which secured a permanent roll for Parliament in national affairs. They broke the power of two of the King's closest advisers, Archbishop William Laud and Thomas Wentworth, Earl of Strafford, eventually executing both.

Now Charles could have accommodated himself to the new realities, but he did not. He conspired against the leaders of Parliament, even attempting to arrest them in the House of Commons itself. When that

failed he left Westminster and by 1642 royalist and parliamentary armies were in the field.

The two civil wars that followed were disastrous for Charles. His armies were destroyed and he was taken prisoner. By the fall of 1649, Parliament was divided between those who wished through negotiation to reach a settlement with the King and the hard-liners, reluctantly led by Oliver Cromwell, who felt that as long as the King remained England would know no peace. The hard-liners won. In December, the Army purged the negotiators from Parliament. The members who remained, derisively known as the Rump Parliament,

brought Charles to trial and had him executed. He went to his death with dignity, proclaiming his innocence. Even though the monarchy was restored in 1660, it would never be the same. A King had been judicially executed and from that time the drift of power away from the King and toward Parliament was irresistible.

**At the University of Richmond,
this is Dan Roberts.**

Resources

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