

## A. Religion, Rebellion, Revolution, and the English Civil War

Imagine the following untoward, absurd, even preposterous narrative of events: in the year 1603 a queen died, full of years, leaving her country seemingly secure and its monarchy popular. Less than forty years later an institution called the Parliament, while declaring itself the upholder of the law, rebelled against one of the successors of that most popular queen. Furthermore, this Parliament, though it professed itself to be very suspicious of armies, nonetheless created an army to fight against this royal successor. After nine years of struggle, in 1649, this army dominated and partially destroyed the Parliament that created it, and executed the sovereign, whom it had captured. A republic was then established, which proved not to work very well, and a general was made head of state. This general proceeded to run the country very much like a king, assuming powers beyond those of that unfortunate monarch who had recently been executed. After the death of the general, a period of intense confusion resulted: Parliament was called back into session, and in 1660 invited the son of the monarch who had been executed to come back from exile as king, to replace the son of the deceased general who had proved inept at ruling. This was accomplished, and the new king ruled for twenty-five years. When he died, however, he was succeeded by his brother, who was unfortunately quite stupid. Knowing very well what an army could do, and believing that this new king was going to use one against them, the members of Parliament revolted against this king as it had once revolted against his father. When this rebellion occurred in 1688 the king ran away, and Parliament at once invited his daughter and her husband to become the new sovereigns. After this, there were no revolutions in this country, and, indeed, its people came to pride themselves on the stability of their government. Though Parliament thereafter became increasingly the most powerful part of the government, kings and queens still ruled and the monarchy once again became popular.

Interestingly enough, the above narrative is not the work of novelist or storyteller, but of history itself; it relates, in admittedly simplistic terms, a sequence of events in seventeenth- and early-eighteenth-century England. Known variously as the Great Rebellion, the Puritan Revolution, the Struggle for the Constitution, and the English Civil War, this group of happenings has fascinated generations of historians as much as it appalled many of those who experienced it.