

## Period 2 (1607-1764)

Source: Philip P. Wiener, Ed., *Dictionary of the History of Ideas: Studies of Selected Pivotal Ideas*, 1973

“Constitutionalism is descriptive of a complicated concept, deeply imbedded in historical experience, which subjects the officials who exercise governmental powers to the limitations of a higher law. Constitutionalism proclaims the desirability of the rule of law as opposed to rule by the arbitrary judgment or mere fiat of public officials.... Throughout the literature dealing with modern public law and the foundations of statecraft the central element of the concept of constitutionalism is that in political society government officials are not free to do anything they please in any manner they choose; they are bound to observe both the limitations on power and the procedures which are set out in the supreme, constitutional law of the community. It may therefore be said that the touchstone of constitutionalism is the concept of limited government under a higher law.”

“I do not say that democracy has been more pernicious on the whole, and in the long run, than monarchy or aristocracy. Democracy has never been and never can be so durable as aristocracy or monarchy; but while it lasts, it is more bloody than either.... Remember, democracy never lasts long. It soon wastes, exhausts, and murders itself. There never was a democracy yet that did not commit suicide. It is in vain to say that democracy is less vain, less proud, less selfish, less ambitious, or less avaricious than aristocracy or monarchy. It is not true, in fact, and nowhere appears in history. Those passions are the same in all men, under all forms of simple government, and when unchecked, produce the same effects of fraud, violence, and cruelty. When clear prospects are opened before vanity, pride, avarice, or ambition, for their easy gratification, it is hard for the most considerate philosophers and the most conscientious moralists to resist the temptation. Individuals have conquered themselves. Nations and large bodies of men, never.”

1. Using the excerpts, respond to parts a, b, and c.
  - a. Briefly explain the point of view made by Passage 1.
  - b. Briefly explain the point of view made by Passage 2.
  - c. Provide ONE piece of evidence about New England government before 1800, and explain how it either supports the interpretation in the first passage OR refutes the interpretation in the second passage.

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3. Answer (a), (b), and (c). Confine your response to the period from 1530 to 1690.
  - a. Briefly describe ONE specific historical similarity between French colonization efforts in North America and British colonization efforts in North America.
  - b. Briefly describe ONE specific historical difference between French colonization efforts in North America and British colonization efforts in North America.
  - c. Briefly explain ONE specific historical reason for the difference between French colonization efforts in North America and British colonization efforts in North America that you indicated in (b).