THE NEW OXFORD HISTORY
OF ENGLAND

*General Editor* · J. M. ROBERTS

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# *A Land of Liberty?*

## ENGLAND

## 1689–1727

JULIAN HOPPIT


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TO MY PARENTS

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# General Editor's Preface

The first volume of Sir George Clark's *Oxford History of England* was published in 1934. Undertaking the General Editorship of a *New Oxford History of England* forty-five years later it was hard not to feel overshadowed by its powerful influence and well-deserved status. Some of Clark's volumes (his own among them) were brilliant individual achievements, hard to rival and impossible to match. Of course, he and his readers shared a broad sense of the purpose and direction of such books. His successor can no longer be sure of doing that. The building-blocks of the story, its reasonable and meaningful demarcations and divisions, the continuities and discontinuities, the priorities of different varieties of history, the place of narrative—all these things are now much harder to agree upon. We now know much more about many things, and think about what we know in different ways. It is not surprising that historians now sometimes seem unsure about the audience to which their scholarship and writing are addressed.

In the end, authors should be left to write their own books. None the less, the *New Oxford History of England* is intended to be more than a collection of discrete or idiosyncratic histories in chronological order. Its aim is to give an account of the development of our country in time. It is hard to treat that development as just the history which unfolds within the precise boundaries of England, and a mistake to suggest that this implies a neglect of the histories of the Scots, Irish, and Welsh. Yet the institutional core of the story which runs from Anglo-Saxon times to our own is the story of a state-structure built round the English monarchy and its effective successor, the Crown in Parliament, and that provides the only continuous articulation of the history of peoples we today call British. It follows that there must be uneven and sometimes discontinuous treatment of much of the history of those peoples. The state story remains, nevertheless, an intelligible thread and to me appears still to justify the title both of this series and that of its predecessor.

If the attention given to the other kingdoms and the principality of Wales must reflect in this series their changing relationship to that central theme, this is not the only way in which the emphasis of individual volumes will be different. Each author has been asked to bring forward what he or she sees as the most important topics explaining the history under study, taking account of the present state of historical knowledge, drawing attention to areas of dispute and to matters on which final judgement is at present difficult (or, perhaps, impossible) and not merely recapitulating what has recently been the fashionable

centre of professional debate. But each volume, allowing for its special approach and proportions, must also provide a comprehensive account, in which politics is always likely to be prominent. Volumes have to be demarcated chronologically but continuities must not be obscured; vestigially or not, copyhold survived into the 1920s and the Anglo-Saxon shires until the 1970s (some of which were to be resurrected in the 1990s, too). Any single volume should be an entry-point to the understanding of processes only slowly unfolding, sometimes across centuries. My hope is that in the end we shall have, as the outcome, a set of standard and authoritative histories, embodying the scholarship of a generation, and not mere compendia in which the determinants are lost to sight among the detail.

J. M. ROBERTS

# Preface

This history of England in the period between the Glorious Revolution and the accession of George II has been written for 'general' readers, a protean and chimerical audience to be sure. To whet and sate its appetite I have written an overview from many perspectives, aiming to depict the period's main events and structures, continuities and changes, vitality and variety, peculiarities and familiarities. That said, though the book contains plenty of information it has been conceived neither as a comprehensive textbook (they are usually mythical) nor, because it has been written to be read, as a work of reference. Above all else it attempts to evoke the spirit of the age, conforming to the view that 'English textbook writers are really essayists, interpreters, and commentators.'[1]

I have outlined in Chapter 1 many of the main features of this extraordinary period of England's history and of how I have come to understand and write about them. But if this book is a very personal view it is of course much more than mine alone, resting as it does on the labours and generosity of many others. That dependence has been all the greater because this is certainly not the distillation of a lifetime's study of England between 1689 and 1727. My background as a historian of England's economy and legislature between 1660 and 1800 may have given me a sense of broad developments within this period, but it left me poorly prepared in other ways. It has been my good fortune, therefore, to have been helped into the intricacies of late seventeenth and early eighteenth-century England by many friends and colleagues, among them Tony Claydon, Tim Hitchcock, Henry Horwitz, Clyve Jones, and Jonathan Scott. Others have helped very directly. Stuart Handley and Andrew Hanham of the 1690–1715 House of Commons section of the History of Parliament kindly made available valuable unpublished material. I owe a particular debt to John Morrill who helped me get going and whose friendship encouraged me to keep going. Paul Langford, the author of the succeeding volume in this series, was generous with good advice at an early stage and later Joanna Innes and Jon Parry were always available to talk through issues. Not the least of my debts is to the General Editor of the series, John Roberts, who has been constantly supportive and judiciously critical even as I assaulted him with my first drafts. Finally, I have been saved from many slips by comments on drafts by several friends—David Hayton, with extraordinary generosity and insight, considered

[1] B. Bailyn, *On the Teaching and Writing of History*, ed. E. C. Lathem (Hanover, New Hampshire, 1994), p. 21.

the complete manuscript and John Beattie, John Morrill, and Stephen Taylor particular chapters. Without their considerable efforts this book would have been worse still.

This book was largely researched at Cambridge University Library, perhaps the best library with extensive holdings on open access in the English-speaking world. I tried the patience of its staff sorely, especially in the Rare Books room, and never found it wanting. That the book was written at all was due in no small measure to the kindness of University College London and the British Academy/Humanities Research Board in providing me with two terms of research leave. I am also grateful to the History department at University College for making available a grant to cover the cost of some of the illustrations.

Many authors are consumed by their books and retain a sense of proportion only through the love, friendship, and kindness of others. No one has done more here than Karin Horowitz; my younger brother, his family, and Jon Parry also shine in this respect; and Martin Daunton, Ros Davies, Richard Fisher, Joanna Innes, and Peter Salt deserve special mention. Sadly Donald Coleman did not live to see this book, but his memory was often inspiring. Finally, but of course also first, are my parents.

July 1999 JULIAN HOPPIT

In this paperback edition I have taken the opportunity to correct minor errors. I am grateful to my father, friends and colleagues for pointing out many of these.

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# Note on the text

In this period England employed the 'old style' Julian calendar, which before 1700 was 10 days and from 1700 11 days behind the Gregorian calendar usually used in Europe. Dates are given in old style unless otherwise stated, though the new year is taken to begin on 1 January not, as was common contemporary practice, on 25 March. I have reproduced quotations exactly as in the sources cited, allowing all the peculiarities of capitalization, italicization, spelling, and grammar to shine through. Footnotes mainly provide references to quotations or brief biographical summaries; place of publication is London unless indicated otherwise. The Bibliography provides a guide to some of the secondary literature behind the book.

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## CHAPTER 1

# England after the Glorious Revolution

A general history of any nation for a specific period involves particular artifice, for a pair of terminal dates are unlikely to serve all of its parts equally well. Historians have indeed long recognized the benefits of thinking of a period's many histories unfolding at different speeds, with their continuities and changes often being only loosely connected. So, for example, the histories of government, war, work, and consumption may interlock, but they also have their own trends and turning points, rhythms and melodies. Yet though this means that the chronological limits of this book must be porous, they are not equally so, for the period's histories are urged on by the unfolding implications of the Glorious Revolution of 1688–9 much more than they are lured to a close by the death of George I in 1727.

If many aspects of England's history in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century were untroubled by either the accession as joint monarchs of William III and Mary II in 1689 (the culmination of the Glorious Revolution) or the death of George I, it is also true that the monarchical succession in this period influenced society at large to an unusual degree. At heart this was because in December 1688 James II (Mary's father), his Queen, and infant Prince fled to France in the face of a massive foreign army headed by William, the Dutch Stadholder. The invasion and the flight were dramatic enough, but they reverberated and resonated down to the middle of the eighteenth century because of the complex nature of the Glorious Revolution and because neither James II nor his legitimate heirs renounced their claim to the throne. Far from the Glorious Revolution solving England's problems and ushering in a period of calm assurance and inexorable progress, it provoked many anxieties and insecurities, divisions and disorders. Only slowly did England come to terms with what had happened. But a second less apparent, yet no less significant source of change, was also unsettling people's lives—slow if erratic economic growth. In agriculture, industry, and trade (internal and overseas) output and productivity inched ahead. If such progress was often overlooked by contemporaries, they were vividly aware of some of its manifestations: England's increasing dependence upon an expanding and

frequently predatory commercial empire; marked social and geographical mobility; the growing pursuit of pleasure; and, pre-eminently, urbanization. But like the Glorious Revolution contemporaries were struck not only by the positive aspects of these changes, but by the challenges they posed, more than anything bemoaning the uncertainties that surrounded them.

## AN ANXIOUS AGE

In 1689 England was well used to times of troubles. 'This Fire of Contention, for at least an hundred Years, hath sometimes been kept smothering in, and sometimes *Vesuvius* like hath burst out into such Flames, as have endanger'd the whole Country round about.'[1] Many well remembered the nation being torn apart in the 1640s by civil war and regicide and in the 1650s by Oliver Cromwell's republican experiment. The Restoration of Charles II in 1660 failed to settle matters, for after a brief honeymoon terrible tensions reappeared between the Crown, Church, Parliament, and people. Nor did the Glorious Revolution—the Dutch invasion, James's flight, and the accession of William and Mary—ease matters. If anything it made them worse. Old stresses between the King and Parliament, Church and Dissent, appeared to be undiminished and were joined by bitter divisions over the succession (involving rebellion and war in Ireland and Scotland, Union between England and Scotland, and plots, riots, and insurrection in England) and two protracted, costly, and bloody wars on the continent. So when in 1703 the Bishop of Salisbury wrote to Sophia Electress of Hanover, Queen Anne's designated successor, even he, an enthusiast for the Glorious Revolution, felt duty bound to warn that ''Tis now a full hundred years that we have been fluctuating *from one expedient to another*'.[2]

Central to the anxieties of this period was the difficulty of establishing a generally agreed relationship between politics and religion. James II had been widely resented because he was a Roman Catholic King to an overwhelmingly Protestant nation, which many likened to a free people being subject to an enslaver. That such resentment was felt even by those who were politically highly conservative meant that after James's flight many saw no need to alter constitutional fundamentals. Yet such fundamentals did change. In particular in 1689 a limited toleration was granted to Protestant Dissenters from the established Church of England, finally shattering the façade of orthodoxy's

[1] 'The Unprejudic'd Laymens Free Thoughts on the Subject the Convocation are Upon' [1690], in *A Collection of State Tracts, Publish'd on Occasion of the Late Revolution in 1688. And During the Reign of King William III*, 3 vols. (1705–7), vol. 1, p. 666.

[2] G. Burnet, *A Memorial Offered to Her Royal Highness the Princess Sophia, Electoress and Duchess Dowager of Hanover. Containing a Deliniation of the Constitution and Policy of England* (1815), p. 39.

hegemony and provoking concerns that the Church was in danger, concerns which, heightened by William III's Calvinism and George I's Lutheranism, lasted for a full generation.[3] Outside the Church scholarship was increasingly questioning traditional landmarks, from Newton's work on gravity to detailed textual criticism of the Bible. Even within the Church the increasing willingness of some to challenge traditional theology eroded old certainties. For many this was all too much and, drawing on the lessons of the rule of the saints in the 1650s, such heterodoxy was often damned as the handmaiden of disunity, chaos, and atheism. Through the period there were frequent and vociferous complaints that immorality and irreligion was sweeping the nation: drunks and Dissenters, prostitutes and pamphleteers, actors and activists might all be censured. Anxiety bred censoriousness, uncertainty a vivid paranoia.

The question of the succession was the second major source of uncertainty in this period. Though many were relieved to see William and Mary replace James some saw it as a catastrophe. Critics of the Glorious Revolution decried it for meddling in God's order or for threatening their fundamental interests. Domestically many retained their allegiance to James and his son, with some actively working for a restoration. Scheming, secrecy, and sedition were pervasive, Jacobite plots and risings ever threatening. Moreover, the succession question was much more than a purely national issue. Within the British Isles it led England to impose her will on both Ireland and Scotland, the legacy of which is still felt. In Ireland a Roman Catholic majority saw James as a potential saviour from Protestant dictators; but he was defeated in battle and the Roman Catholic majority subjected to the Protestant ascendancy's so-called 'Penal laws' (even if in practice they might be circumvented). In Scotland James had fewer supporters, but as a descendant of her own Stewart royal family he was vital to national identity, leading to an attempt to break away from English thinking on the succession after the question was revived in 1700. The breakaway made little progress. The Union of 1707 involved the abolition of the Edinburgh Parliament and after the failure of the Jacobite rising of 1715–16 parts of the Highlands were militarized.

Jacobitism was in fact also a powerful pawn in the European balance of power, helping to draw Britain into war against France and Spain, and into periodic breakdowns in her relations with a number of other nations. Indeed, one of the most important consequences of the Dutch invasion of 1688 was that it decisively involved England in European affairs, especially in the Nine Years War (1689–97) and the War of the Spanish Succession (1702–13). War is always full of uncertainty and these two, largely waged against France, the

[3] The Church of England is conveniently often referred to as the 'Anglican Church', though this label was not used in this period.

greatest power of the day, were particularly so. It was not merely that battles were won and lost, but that at times the burden upon domestic resources produced a chaos that many found hard to bear. A crisis in the domestic coinage in 1696, the ravages of privateers upon overseas trade, and unprecedented levels of taxation and mobilization were felt by all. Not the least challenge was that to pay for huge armies and navies a permanent national debt was erected on the security of heightened parliamentary taxation. England may have hoped that the flight of James II had rid it of the threat of kingly absolutism, but because of this 'financial revolution' it found itself governed by an increasingly powerful State. But it was also an experimental State, capable of both great achievements and enormous blunders, notably the catastrophe that enveloped public and private credit with the bursting of the South Sea Bubble in 1720.

If few doubted that the great wars against France were just, many questioned the treaties, strategies, and sacrifices they entailed. The most enduring anxiety was whether the wars were producing domestic changes threatening the very society the nation had gone to war to defend. Some worried that the financial revolution entailed moving wealth from countryside to town and from landowner to businessman, profoundly unsettling the traditional order and threatening a new distribution of power. In this view, bankers, stockjobbers, and contractors had succeeded in achieving a social revolution where James II had failed. But such disquiet was, in practice, partly consequent upon longer term changes associated with broadly based economic growth. England in 1700 was at the centre of the long transition from the early modern to the modern world. If its population was stagnant, agriculture, industry, and commerce were all enjoying some slow growth. Though this aided employment and income, growth was very slow, easily allowing pessimists to seize upon the supposed costs involved: dislocation of the customary economy, erosion of hospitality, growing idleness, increasing luxuriousness, heightened social mobility, and greater social disorder in towns. Moreover, if the economy was growing stronger it was still liable to profound dislocations. In the 1690s many harvests failed, leading to widespread hardship; war dislocated trade, heightened taxes, and removed the main breadwinner from many families; and with the economy becoming increasingly involved in international trade it was further prey to the uncertainties of pirates, rocks, trade winds, and distant correspondents. All told, it is hardly surprising that some wondered 'what is human Life but a Scene of Trouble and Sorrow, where is a Succession of Evils and Miseries, like the restless Waves of the Sea, rolling on the neck of one another?'[4]

[4] J. Filkes, *A Funeral Sermon Preach'd upon the Death of Samuel Wright of Daventry, Gent.* (1712), p. 6.

And so, even a generation after the Glorious Revolution, some believed that uncertainties and insecurities abounded because the nation had been unable to solve old problems and had been entrapped by new ones. Even if some of these anxieties were imagined rather than real, self-interested rather than general, because they were felt in so many different ways they had a pervasive influence. In particular, pessimism was a breeding ground for the fractious and factious. In town and countryside social tension sometimes boiled over, in politics the contest for power was at fever pitch—party politics became the norm and society at large highly politicized. It was little wonder that the age produced great satires, that irony was a common weapon, or that the jeremiad was one of the era's characteristic voices:

> a Nation which hath stood its ground, and kept its privileges and freedoms for Hundreds of Years, is in less than a Third of a Century, quite undone; hath lavishly spent above 160 Millions in that time, made Hecatombs of *British* Lives, stockjobb'd (*or canonaded*) away its Trade, perverted, and then jested away its Honour, Law, and Justice; burlesqu'd its Religion; disavow'd the Divinity of its Author, then banish'd it, and in the Room thereof, offer'd Sacrifice to an *Idol* of the *People's* setting up, which has produced Swarms of others of Monstrous Shapes, and Forms; compounded of the Dregs of all former Heresies, Sects, Schisms, and Rebellions; hatch'd from Incest, Whoredom, and Adultery; and all centring in Atheism, Anarchy, and Confusion.[5]

## AN AGE OF PROSPECTS

Foreigners tended to take a far less gloomy view. Famously when Tsar Peter the Great undertook his 'western embassy' its focal point was the four months spent at Deptford in 1698, acquiring a familiarity of England's maritime abilities that led him to reckon 'it a much happier Life to be an Admiral in *England*, than *Czar* in *Russia*.'[6] He took back with him to Russia not just skills and gifts, but experts with which to reform his government and armed forces. Even twenty years later, Russian apprentices were being sent to the banks of the Thames to be trained. What was important here was not simply that England was judged a leading power worth emulating, but that initially at least she had the confidence to allow another country to exploit this expertise. Amidst the jeremiads there were, in fact, many who saw England as a favoured nation, moving out of its times of troubles into a brighter world of opportunities.

Few doubted that England had enormous natural potential. 'God hath planted us in a Serene, a Temperate and a Healthy Climate, free from the

[5] *A Computation of the Increase of London, and Parts Adjacent* (1719), p. 19. 'Hecatombs' was a great public sacrifice among the ancient Greeks and Romans.

[6] J. Perry, *The State of Russia, under the Present Czar* (1716), p. 164.

Terrors and Desolations of Earthquakes and *Volcano*'s; free from the frequent Annoyances of Plagues and Pestilences; in a rich and fertile Land, that plentifully yields all we can desire, not only for the Support, but for the Comforts and Delights of Life; and that in such Abundance, as affords Supplies, not only for its Nation, but for many Foreign Countries, and for a beneficial Commerce with the remotest Nations.'[7] England's fruitfulness and island situation made her, by such views, peculiarly able to exploit those commercial opportunities which, in a society unused to continuous technological development, provided the main hope of leaving hardship and want behind. 'Our *Foreign Trade* is now become the Strength and Riches of the Kingdom . . . and is the living Fountain from whence we draw all our Nourishment: It disperses that Blood and Spirits throughout all the Members, by which the Body Politick subsists'.[8] Though such mercantile capitalism had its exploitative side, notoriously in the expanding slave trade, real benefits were brought back to England. Favourable comparisons were often drawn between English prosperity and foreign poverty—foreigners were often struck by the ability of the poor to afford shoes and white bread. Moreover, it meant that England's horizons were growing. After a century of soul searching and looking inwards, the advantages of an expansiveness of spirit were now being seen. Colonial adventures in the West Indies and North America provided a safety valve for some of the tensions within England, extended the world of political obligations enormously, and brought home a dazzling array of new experiences. The order of things could not but change.

It was one thing to be blessed by God, another to reap the harvest. In so far as contemporaries explained this they put it down to the belief that the English enjoyed unparalleled liberty, allowing them to think innovatively and to exploit opportunities that came their way: '*England* is a Country of Liberty, every one lives there as he wishes'.[9] Freedom of speech, of worship, and of the press were all celebrated as never before, and the capacity for social mobility frequently observed. Such freedoms, even if overdrawn, were real enough. But the social flexibility they allowed was not only of economic significance, for it meant that there was a wider pluralism and heterodoxy. Toleration, accommodation, and compromise, even if reluctantly given, was central to everyday life. Whereas the jeremiads were erected on a false memory of national solidarity and monoculturalism, there were many who enjoyed the variety of English life, from Protestant refugees escaping the intolerance of Louis XIV to alehouse pranksters

[7] E. Saunders, *A Discourse of the Dangers of Abusing the Divine Blessings . . . a Sermon Preach'd before the Honourable House of Commons . . . December the 8th, 1721* ([1721?]), p. 10.

[8] W. Wood, *A Survey of Trade* (1718), p. 4.

[9] B.-L. de Muralt, *Letters Describing the Character and Customs of the English and French Nations* (2nd edn., 1726), p. 2.

mocking their social superiors. In every sense England in this period was a medley, and one that many enjoyed. It was possible, therefore, to emphasize not social divisions, but rich diversity wedded to common identities and mutual interests. 'So far is it from being true, which Mr. *Hobbes* asserts . . . *That Men are naturally in a State of War and Enmity with one another*; that the Contrary *Principle*, laid down by . . . *Aristotle*, is most certainly true, *That Men are naturally akin and Friends to each other*.'[10]

The guarantee of England's freedoms was the rule of law and a balanced constitution that supposedly prevented particular interests from becoming over powerful. To its champions the Glorious Revolution had decisively established that achievement. Voltaire, in exile in London from 1726–9 (and who reckoned England 'the land of liberty'), thought she was the only nation 'on earth which has succeeded in controlling the power of kings by resisting them' and had established a 'wise system of government in which the prince . . . has his hands tied for doing evil, in which the aristocrats are great without arrogance and vassals, and in which the people share in the government without confusion.'[11] Much of this was puff, though even a Roman Catholic could declare that England's constitution 'undoubtedly is the best in the world', but there had been a decisive change in 1689 through the institutionalization of Parliament.[12] In the 1670s and 1680s both Charles II and James II had seen Parliament as an opponent rather than an ally or resource, and strove to rule without it: from 1679 to 1688 it met just five times, with the Commons conducting business for a total of only 171 days. After the Glorious Revolution all monarchs governed through it, if not always enthusiastically: from 1689 to 1698 it met eleven times and the Commons did business on nearly 1,300 days. Interests did not now fester, they were aired, debated, and weighed; even if bills and elections might be battlegrounds, Parliament was ultimately an arena of compromise. Nor were the effects of this merely felt in the conduct of 'high politics', for the availability of Parliament provided the nation at large with the legislative means of tackling particular problems. In that way stronger relations between centre and locality were forged and new political communities established that sometimes crossed traditional fault lines, even if only briefly. Such links were the more important because frequent parliaments were joined to frequent elections, encouraging and not closing off debate and the expression of alternative views of the public good. Parties may

[10] *The Works of the Most Reverend Dr John Tillotson, Lord Archbishop of Canterbury*, ed. T. Birch, 3 vols. (1752), vol. 1, p. 305.

[11] *Voltaire's Correspondence*, ed. T. Besterman, 107 vols. (Geneva, 1953–65), vol. 2, p. 37; Voltaire, *Letters on England*, trans. L. Tancock (Harmondsworth, 1980), p. 45.

[12] M. W. Farr, 'Correspondence between Sir Robert Throckmorton and Nathaniel Pigott 1706–7', *University of Birmingham Historical Journal*, 8 (1961), p. 91.

have been at one another's throat in all of this, but they worked within a system that could cope with the strain; factionalism was becoming institutionalized.

There is no question that by the middle of the 1720s the divisions and heats which had beset seventeenth-century England, and which had provided the opportunity for the Glorious Revolution, were now less potent and threatening. It was not so much that divergent views had gone away, but that many of them had been brought within the system. A series of compromises had proved that heterodoxy did not necessarily mean anarchy, taking the sting out of many anxieties. The mere passage of time also helped. Perhaps there was some sense of exhaustion. Few were now alive who as adults had endured the strains of the Restoration world. And even those who had reluctantly embraced the accession of William and Mary never forgot that it had given them what they most prized, a Protestant establishment wedded to an active mixed constitution. Moreover, the gains won at the peace treaties in 1697 and 1713, the latter on the back of the Duke of Marlborough's famous victories in battle, not only guaranteed that achievement but also established England (more accurately 'Britain' and, from 1707, the 'United Kingdom of Great Britain') as a European great power capable of exercising its authority across the Atlantic and into the Mediterranean.

Changes within the political system and in England's international fortunes were central to the history of this period, but they rested upon the vitality of her economy and society. The provision of the material wherewithal for this was undoubtedly impressive, but it bespoke other changes. As her economy expanded so the costs of political instability mounted. More important, as none seriously denied the importance of prosperity, and because this often rested on the efforts of new interests, so a more complex society had to be tolerated. Few doubted the value of merchants, many marvelled at dockyards and ironworks, and the burgeoning service sector with its expanding professions (doctors, attorneys, and surveyors) was widely utilized. One of the most striking features of the period, indeed, is the way these most vibrant parts of society were embraced by old England. Town and countryside were closely interwoven, not so much by new wealth flowing into landed estates as by old wealth embracing the London season, urban professionals, and the diversions of spas and county towns (such as assembly rooms, races, and fairs).

Urbanization beyond London was, indeed, one of the most important features of the evolution of English society from the late seventeenth century. It rested upon heightened specialization in and interdependence between her economic regions, greater agricultural productivity, and the willingness of people to abandon traditional ways of life. Many did so only because they were driven by want, but some were lured by the vivacity and novelty towns offered—from strolling players and ballad singers to coffee-houses and clubs.

A critical feature of this was the function towns played in setting new standards, not only in fashion and leisure, but in sociability. This was especially the case amongst the more prosperous, who developed ideas of politeness that contrasted with older traditions of hospitality. That such ideas were avowedly socially exclusive was vital to their function as a new ideology that many within polite society embraced, providing a common ground even to those of very different religious or political views. Undoubtedly this found its most remarkable expression in the outpourings of a liberated press—from newspapers to periodicals, plays, novels, pamphlets, translations, sermons, and books. Certainly an age studded with writers of the stature of Addison, Congreve, Defoe, Gay, Pope, Steele, and Swift was distinctive, but they were only part of a wider pursuit of pleasure which if originating after 1660 was only now really bearing fruit.

It may have been, as one Scot remarked in 1726, that 'The English People are not a little vain of Themselves, and their Country', but by then there were some good reasons for it.[13] For the most part disunity had been overcome by establishing a political and religious compromise which most could live with; England's international fortunes had been dramatically transformed; and her economy and society were evidently more productive and vibrant than ever. To that extent therefore the pessimists were right, England was abandoning old values and old ways.

## SCALE AND SCOPE, SOURCES AND METHODS

This book is organized around the two main structures underpinning English history just outlined: the uncertainties and insecurities consequent upon the Glorious Revolution and the challenge to many social norms by the halting experience of economic progress. That English society did not unravel in the face of these disruptions was due both to their substantial perceived benefits and because of an increasing (if still incomplete) willingness towards accommodation and compromise that allowed rival views to coexist. In 1689 it had still been hoped that the old chimera of social solidarity, an ancient constitution, and religious orthodoxy could be 'restored'; by 1727 pluralism and heterodoxy in many walks of life were accepted, however reluctantly.

This complex history can only be told by unpacking its constituent parts. But there are many ways that might be done. Here there has been a desire to avoid over compartmentalization, so that links can be made between constituent parts of England's history that are often kept apart, even at the risk of occasional repetition, the separation of some topics usually kept together,

[13] *James Thomson (1700–1748) Letters and Documents*, ed. A. D. McKillop (Lawrence, 1958), p. 48.

and employing different methodologies between chapters. A single narrative is also eschewed, for that would be too exclusive. Rather at the outset some foundation stones are put in place, on top of which are then laid a number of different histories, all related but all different. The bedrock of the book is laid in Chapters 2, 3, and 4, which explore the broad features of England's polity, economy, and society, and her experience of two major wars. Of the remaining ten chapters, three discuss political developments at the centre, which relate particularly closely to the chapters exploring religious history and England's imperial endeavours. The economic history of the period is mainly told in Chapters 10 and 11, though those chapters also explore aspects of the social, cultural, and intellectual history of the period. Intellectual history, a sub-discipline too narrowly defined by some of its practitioners, is dealt with in many places through the book (ideas really mattered to these two generations) but is discussed in concerted fashion in Chapter 6. The final two chapters explore different aspects of the social history of the period, the impact of new patterns of urban life and leisure and the authorities' struggles to maintain order in the midst of so much political, religious, economic, and social change.

If the structure of this book is central to its identity and aspirations, it has also been written within other important limits. First and foremost, no part of England's history has been excluded from consideration, though the book is necessarily selective. This book provides an overview which emphasizes certain features because they had a particular importance in the period, either in terms of continuity or change—though of course defining and weighing importance is a very personal thing. A second significant constraint is that this is a history of England, though one attempting to pay due regard both to the way that history is composed of local and regional experiences and also of how it must be placed in its wider contexts, both within and beyond the British Isles. Forays outside England are only made when it aids the understanding of her history—though given the union of the English and Scottish Crowns since 1603 particularly in the realm of foreign relations 'Britain' not 'England' must be used. Similarly, if there is a constant concern to locate the history of England between 1689 and 1727 in both its immediate and longer term chronological context, the focus is very much upon this particular period. A fourth self-imposed constraint has been to avoid engaging explicitly with the arguments of the hundreds of historians who have also worked on this period. As the discussion of further reading near the end of the book makes clear, a rich and rapidly expanding historiography underpins this book, both in terms of detail and structure, but methodological or evidential debates are kept in the background. Sides are taken, as they must be, but usually it is done silently. Nor, indeed, is this merely a work of synthesis. Much primary research has been undertaken into the nooks and crannies of the period, not just because it

aids understanding but also because it adds depth and colour in ways that a dependence upon secondary literature alone cannot. To maximize the efficiency of this, however, attention has been concentrated on printed sources. Many of these are editions of manuscript sources, from diaries and correspondence to debates and court records, but many are contemporary printed works—somewhat reflecting the enormous explosion of publishing in this period, with slightly more works published in these thirty-eight years than in the previous one hundred. Finally, the book was written with a constant eye on the word limit of the series. Rarely does any piece of historical writing have a 'natural' length, for so much depends on an author's perceptions of his or her readership and the choices then made between narrative and analysis, generalization and specialization. This book could have been half or twice as long, but either way England's history in this remarkable period would have looked and felt rather different.

## CONCLUSION

The death of George I at Osnabrück in the summer of 1727 was no milestone in England's history. There was no question of shipping his body to London for a State funeral and he was buried in the family vault in the Leineschloss church in Hanover. Life in England went on much as before. If George was not unloved by his people, he was personally unendearing, had lived intermittently in England for less than thirteen years, and aside from his Protestantism represented too little that was dear to them. So in so far as the death of one person can mark the end of the era we must look elsewhere. One particular man, an 84-year-old, stands out. He had lived through the civil wars, the disinterment of Oliver Cromwell's body for posthumous execution as a traitor, the commercial, Glorious, and financial revolutions, two major and a handful of minor wars, the Union of England and Scotland, imperial expansion, and a Jacobite rising. He had witnessed the last visitation of the plague in England, the building of Wren's St Paul's, the development of a coffee-house culture, and in old age the vogue for Handel's operas. He had been born into a land of hardship and occasional want and died with it well able to feed itself even though large amounts of corn were exported overseas or distilled into gin. Yet in itself to have seen so much was not so unusual. But unlike George I this man was buried in Westminster Abbey, with the Lord Chancellor, the Dukes of Montrose and Roxburgh, and the Earls of Pembroke, Sussex, and Macclesfield as his pall-bearers. 'He lived honoured by his compatriots and was buried like a king who had done well by his subjects.'[14]

[14] Voltaire, *Letters on England*, p. 69.

Few doubted that the achievements of Sir Isaac Newton, who died in March 1727, warranted such majestic comparisons.

> All-piercing Sage! Who sat not down and dreamt
> Romantic Schemes, defended by the Din
> Of specious Words, and Tyranny of Names,
> But bidding his amazing Mind attend,
> And with heroick Patience Years on Years
> Deep-searching, saw at last the SYSTEM dawn,
> And shine, of all his Race, on Him alone.[15]

Newton's work on gravity had transformed not merely the common world-view, but that of the solar system. His developments in optics and calculus only underscored his genius as the climax of the Scientific Revolution. But the advance of important new ways of thinking and the abandonment of error and superstition was not so straightforward. Newton was much more complex. He had spent much of his life as a public servant, vigorously pursuing coiners to the gallows, and delved long and deep into alchemy and biblical chronology. He was moreover vain, argumentative, and high-handed. This was no saint or unregenerate modernist who had died, but a man who neatly encapsulates the Janus-like complexity of late seventeenth and early eighteenth-century England—its mixture of old and new, fear and confidence, despair and hope, aggression and poise. With its anxieties and prospects it was indeed an era on the cusp.

[15] J. Thomson, *A Poem Sacred to the Memory of Sir Isaac Newton* (3rd edn., 1727), p. 6.

## CHAPTER 2

# The Glorious Revolution and the Revolution Constitution

In 1751 Henry Fielding, the writer and Justice of the Peace, bemoaned that

> There is nothing so much talked of, and so little understood in this Country, as the *Constitution*. It is a Word in the Mouth of every Man; and yet when we come to discourse of the Matter, there is no Subject on which our Ideas are more confused and perplexed. Some, when they speak of the Constitution, confine their Notions to the Law; others to the Legislature; others, again, to the governing or executive Part; and many there are, who jumble all these together in one Idea. One Error, however, is common to them all: for all seem to have the Conception of something uniform and permanent, as if the Constitution of *England* partook rather of the Nature of the Soil than of the Climate, and was as fixed and constant as the former, not as changing and variable as the latter.[1]

The root explanation of this telling analysis is that, for better and for worse, England has never had a comprehensive written constitution, enabling her political structures to be remarkably responsive to the twists and turns of altered circumstances. Indeed, changes have taken place virtually unnoticed, even unintended, as well as before the full gaze of the public, to the extent that even to this day what constitutes the constitution is unfixed, confused, and occasionally contentious. If precedent has provided a guide, so have the vagaries of custom, tradition, and idealism, allowing one man's interpretation to be another's poison. Above all else England's constitution has been mutable and its principles riddled by compromise.

The Glorious Revolution of 1688–9 forced contemporaries to think hard about England's constitution and the sort of polity and society they wished to inhabit. Few periods in the nation's history have seen as much speculation on this score as the early months of 1689. Yet the debates and resolutions made then failed to settle the matter for too many questions went unresolved and too

[1] *An Enquiry into the Causes of the Late Increase of Robbers and Related Writings*, ed. M. R. Zirker (Oxford, 1988), p. 65.

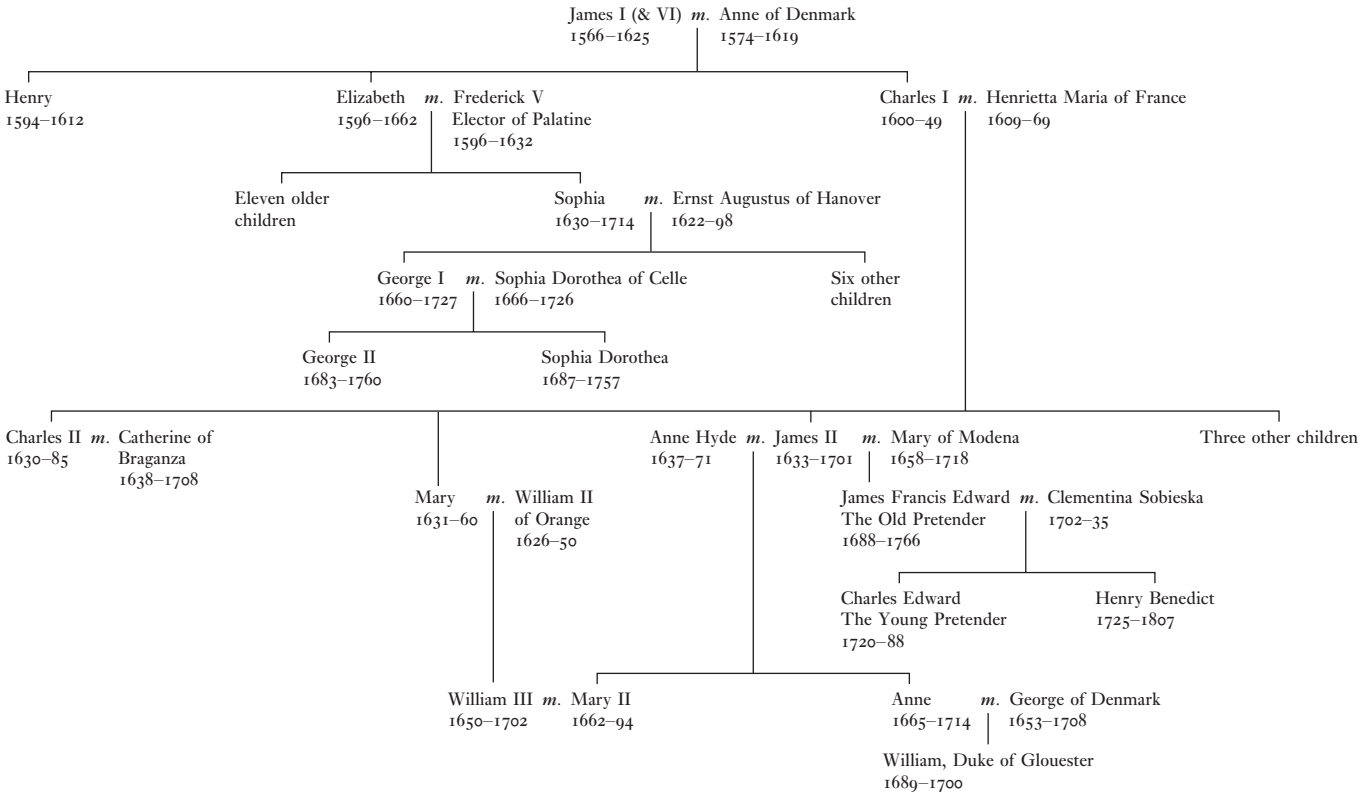


FIG. 1 The succession to the Crowns of England and Scotland, 1603–1727

many questions gained answers only generally acceptable during a relatively short-lived crisis. Finally, many answers had unforeseen consequences, taking a generation to work through both the theory and practice of politics. Constitutionally, the Glorious Revolution had obvious short-term dimensions and hardly less profound long-term consequences. Yet if the full ramifications of the events of late 1688 and the decisions of early 1689 must be appreciated there was nothing pre-ordained or inevitable about the path taken. England's constitutional development after 1688 was fractured, disputed, and frequently unclear. No grand plan was being followed and uncertainty was ubiquitous.

## THE DUTCH INVASION AND THE GLORIOUS REVOLUTION

James II succeeded his brother Charles II as King of England in 1685. Though the prospect of this moment had divided many, when it happened it was generally and forcefully acclaimed. For the moment Protestant suspicions of having a Catholic King were put to one side. Yet only three years later, just before Christmas 1688, in the face of a foreign army sweeping over southern England, James fled to France with his wife and infant son. Though he soon made an attempt to reclaim Ireland he never returned to England and spent the rest of his days in an exile reeking of pathos. With little delay Convention assembly—effectively a Parliament elected via a summons from William rather than the king—interpreted his flight as a renunciation of the throne and offered it to William, the Dutch Stadholder and Prince of Orange, and his wife Mary, daughter of James. It was gratefully accepted. At core, therefore, the Glorious Revolution was dynastic, a breaking of the hereditary succession. Though it was much more than that, examining the transfer of the Crown must be the starting-point.

On 5 November 1688 William and his army had landed at Torbay in Devon. The date was already celebrated as marking two key moments of England's deliverance from Catholic threats, of the failure of the Spanish armada in 1588 and of the Gunpowder Plot on 5 November 1605. Consequently William's landing only heightened providentialist explanations of national events. The Prince of Orange, however, left nothing to such higher considerations. He came at the head of a massive, well-trained, and seasoned force. Some 500 ships, four times the number of the catastrophic Spanish armada, brought 5,000 horses and over 20,000 men, most of them Dutch. William came prepared for the worst and for some time he anticipated it, expecting James II to meet force with force. Worse, in England suspicions of the Dutch abounded. Within living memory Britain and Holland had waged war against each other and they continued to be bitter trading rivals. In English eyes, moreover,

the Dutch were associated with the dangers of republican government and Calvinism in religion. From the outset, therefore, William's Dutch origins were an issue to be confronted. Whatever else it was worth, therefore, the invitation sent to him on 30 June from seven of the great and the good of England, calling upon him to help the nation in its hour of need, failed to do that. Shrewd politician that he was, William knew that he had to make a 'Declaration' that at the very least gave the English no cause for alarm at his invasion. In this document the injustices of the previous three years were skilfully illustrated and laid at the door not of James but of 'evil Counsellors'. Their policies had challenged 'the established Laws, Liberties and Customs, and, above all, the Religion . . . that is established among them'. At the core of the crisis, it was said, lay attempts to subvert the Protestant establishment in Church and State by reviving Roman Catholicism. Consequently, arbitrary government had been introduced: laws were being dispensed with; local government personnel were being purged; institutions as various as corporations and Oxford colleges were being reconstituted and manipulated; and ancient rights were being denied. In short, for three years a revolution in the sociopolitical order had been taking place. William came, according to this version, as a conservator and restorer, not as an invader or radical. Indeed, he made no claim on the throne at this stage, nor any plea to topple James. In fact, 'this our Expedition is intended for no other design, but to have a free and lawful Parliament assembled as soon as is possible'.[2] On this last point, and many others, William was as good as his word.

As a piece of propaganda William's Declaration passed comment only upon the British causes of the Glorious Revolution, not the equally important international ones. Here William was driven by Dutch foreign policy objectives, especially the desire to ensure that England did not ally with Louis XIV in the forthcoming war between the Republic and France. For years the Dutch had felt the pressure of French expansionism: in 1672 William had personally led Dutch resistance to a French invasion; in 1685 the Sun King's revocation of the Edict of Nantes, depriving Gallic Protestants of a measure of protection, looked like initiating a renewed attempt to impose Catholicism across Europe; and in 1687 serious economic warfare between the Dutch republic and France broke out, largely instigated by Louis. From the Dutch perspective, therefore, in 1688 full-scale military conflict appeared to be imminent and if England joined with France then the republic would be caught in a massive pincer movement. It was to prevent this possibility that the Dutch committed huge resources to the invasion of England.

[2] E. N. Williams (ed.), *The Eighteenth-Century Constitution, 1688–1815* (Cambridge, 1960), pp. 10–16.

Having disembarked, William led his army to Exeter, 'a genteel and rich city and a considerable port', to take stock.[3] For day after day the overwhelming response to the invasion among the English was inaction. William hoped to attract Englishmen to his side, but his Declaration had no immediately visible effect and few made the move. All the while James was gathering together his army and with his standard now raised the battle for English hearts and minds was joined on both sides. With bloody civil war and war between the three kingdoms threatening, memories of the 1640s were much to the fore. Yet remarkably James's natural supporters, the landed gentry and Anglican clergy, also stayed at home, sheltering behind drawn curtains and closed shutters. As King he reasonably expected more and such passive disobedience was crucial in influencing subsequent events. For once the silence was deafening, showing the profound and widespread distrust people had of their King and of the overriding desire to avoid repeating the horrors of the 1640s. To William the absence of active expressions of loyalty to James was interpreted as leaving unlocked a door to be pushed open. It was characteristic of him that he decisively seized the opportunity, discovering that in the event it opened with little effort.

On 21 November the invaders began their march across England which was to end in London only four weeks later. There was no battle en route and, aside from a skirmish or two, no bloodshed. This was all the more remarkable given William's rather ordinary military skills and resulted from a complete collapse of support for James, especially desertions and intrigues within the army. On 22 November, only three days after the King had joined his army at Salisbury, two of his closest advisers and most important officers, Churchill[4] and Grafton,[5] his nephew, abandoned their master and threw in their lot with William, contributing to a collapse of morale and will across the body of the army. At the same time James was deserted in the nation at large. For many the issue was uncomplicated. As Lord Delamere put it, 'No man can love fighting for its own sake, nor find any pleasure in dangers . . . but when I see all lies at stake, I am not to choose whether I will be a slave and a Papist, or a

[3] H. M. C., *Report on the Manuscripts of the Earl of Egmont*, vol. 2 (Dublin, 1909), p. 194.

[4] John Churchill, 1650–1722, from a Devonshire family, active against Monmouth's rebellion in 1685, corresponded with William before his invasion and with James long after his flight. Privy Councillor and Earl of Marlborough 1689, dismissed in 1692, restored to favour 1698, his wife was long Anne's confidante helping to secure his dukedom in 1702, led Britain's continental armies to many victories 1702–12, rewarded in 1705 with land and money to build Blenheim Palace, lost authority as his wife's star waned and that of the Tories waxed; voluntary exile 1712–14, initially buried at Westminster Abbey.

[5] Henry Fitzroy, 1663–1690, the illegitimate son of Charles II by Barbara Villiers, Countess of Caslemaine, made Duke of Grafton, in 1689 committed himself to William's kingship, killed at the siege of Cork.

Protestant and a free man'.[6] At Nottingham members of the northern nobility and gentry issued a declaration in favour of William, cataloguing their reasons for abandoning James: he was dispensing with laws as he pleased; he put papists into offices; he sacked honest judges; he discouraged and discountenanced Protestants; he declared that the use of law against arbitrary proceedings was rebellion; he used a standing army to enforce policies; and he denied subjects the right to petition. Consequently, 'We count it rebellion to resist a king that governs by law, but he was always counted a tyrant that made his will the law; to resist such a one we justly esteem it no rebellion, but a necessary defence'.[7]

James literally broke down, faced as he was by a massive enemy army, intrigue and desertions in both army and navy, the almost total neutralism of those who should have been his natural allies, violent anti-Catholicism in the capital, and the rejection of his own daughters, especially Anne. As his authority crumbled, his body and mind collapsed. He was twice bled and had to resort to opium to get any sleep. The King of England was humbled and the emptiness of his majesty dramatically exposed. Whatever the rhetoric of divine ordination, events now clearly showed that all power, even monarchical power, was fundamentally consensual at base. By mid-November 1688 it appears that the silent majority viewed James as a threat to the fundamental national interests. More generally, the collapse of James's authority demonstrated once and for all that a line could be drawn between what was and what was not acceptable kingly behaviour. Even though there was much debate over just where to make the distinction, its key features—that the monarch must be Protestant, employ the prerogative sparingly, and govern through Parliament—were generally understood and all subsequent monarchs appreciated the practical necessity of ruling with the agreement of the majority of the political nation.

Indecision and repeated nosebleeds marked James's last days in England. With his confidence in tatters he was unable accurately to assess his position. He returned quickly to London (William lagged well behind taking nearly a month to move from Salisbury to the capital) in the hope of reviving his position. But by now his attempts at conciliation, especially the calling of a new Parliament, were seen for what they were, the stratagems of desperation and won few over. At the last this foolish King determined on one final foolish act, he fled. On 8 December 1688 he took the Great Seal, the pre-eminent emblem of monarchical rule and technically required for the conduct of much government, from the Lord Chancellor, Judge Jeffreys, and demanded back those

[6] H. M. C., *Calendar of the Manuscripts of the Marquis of Ormonde, K. P.*, new series, vol. 8 (1920), p. 9.

[7] H. M. C., *Ormonde*, p. 13.

writs which had not yet been sent out calling a new Parliament.[8] The writs were burnt. Three days later, in the dead of night, the King slipped out of Whitehall Palace and as he was rowed from Westminster to Vauxhall he cast the Great Seal into the Thames. Hoping to escape to France he was stopped by suspicious fishermen at Rochester. But that he initially failed hardly mattered for he had shown an unwillingness to stay, to lead, to be King. But his pique and disgust with his people, not to mention his stupidity, were all evidenced by the fate of those charred writs and that lost seal. By making no provision for his absence he had tried to leave his country without a government or the means of a legal government so that any other, aside from his restoration, would have to be 'illegal'. As ever, he had failed to realize that 'legality' alone could not save him, for his monarchy was no longer credible. When James made his second, and this time successful flight (he was allowed to escape by William), he had in many respects already denied the very possibility of his own restoration or, indeed, that of his son, the infant 'Old Pretender'.

## THE ACCESSION OF WILLIAM AND MARY

On the 18th of December, and soaked by driving rain, William entered London and the capital was put under an army of occupation—all the English troops in and about London were sent at least twenty miles away and the Dutch army was brought into the capital. Still William made no claim to the throne and many options remained. But they were dramatically reduced by the successful flight of James to France two days before Christmas. Recalling James was improbable, establishing a regency or offering the throne to William and Mary (from the Convention assembly, which was only retrospectively declared to be a Parliament) much more likely. Difficult choices had to be made and major scruples and hurdles had first to be overcome. In the first place, to offer the throne to Mary was to break the hereditary succession. Even if James was taken, by his flight, to have abdicated, then the next in line to the throne was his young son. Second, as Mary had a much more immediate hereditary claim than her husband, to offer the throne jointly to them was to step still further away from the rules of princely inheritance. Finally, the Crown was offered to William and Mary by the Convention assembly, convened on 22 January, which, strictly speaking, had no authority to do so. Given these difficulties, it was hardly surprising that debate raged not only in the Convention, but in coffee houses and on street corners. Alternative assumptions and opinions vied

[8] George Jeffreys, 1644–1689, the leading legal supporter of Charles II and James II, becoming Baron Jeffreys of Wem, most famous for conducting the 'bloody assize' in western England after Monmouth's rebellion of 1685, arrested attempting to flee abroad in 1688, died in the Tower.

with one another as biblical precept, history, and parliamentary precedent were ransacked for exemplars. Yet though such ideas and information were like quicksand, the profound difficulties and irregularities were all overcome, demonstrating both the limited options available and the extent of common thinking about the way forward among the majority of political leaders of the country. It was the urgency and agreement within the Convention that is striking, not sloth and dissension.

There is no doubt that by January 1689 William wanted to be King and would not be a Prince Regent to his wife as Queen: 'he could not think of holding any thing by apron-strings'.[9] Equally, Mary soon demonstrated that she would not be Queen alone and would only rule jointly with her husband. Significantly, Princess Anne also stepped aside for her brother-in-law. With these three closing ranks so decisively and with London under the watchful gaze of Dutch troops, the Peers and Commons of the Convention had little choice in deciding the succession. Indeed, a solitary, realizable option remained. So the succession of William and Mary was ultimately determined not by 'Parliament' but by princes. But if the assembly ultimately had only a minor role in deciding the succession it was vital in underwriting and legitimating it. For the sake of unity, legality, and future good government, the Convention had to come to some sort of quasi-formal version of events.

Not the least of the difficulties was that in January 1689 James, though now in France, still claimed to be King. So, given that most no longer wished him to be King, his flight had to be described as a renunciation of the throne and the rights of his son had to be negated. This was the pressing task facing members of the Convention when it first met. It is notable that it was the Commons which first adopted the firm position that James had abdicated and that the throne was vacant, and that the Lords, despite considerable opposition to such a wording, eventually agreed to this. But in justifying this, fiction and fact melded. William's invasion was called an expedition. James, the majority said, did not abscond in fear of his life but fled because of a base cowardice that conclusively affirmed his culpability and evilness. In English eyes this was evidenced above all else by his aggressive Catholicism—his promotion of Catholics to places of power in the universities, the courts, the armed forces, and government were seen as a prelude to the imposition of popery upon the country. To the Protestant majority Catholicism was indeed commonly seen as the handmaiden of arbitrary government and Protestantism alone was compatible with freedom. Time and again 'Popery and Slavery' were lumped together. So in the debates in the Convention, the story was that the people, threatened by tyranny, passively resisted James and he renounced them. Many agreed

[9] G. Burnet, *History of his Own Time*, 6 vols. (Oxford, 1823), vol. 3, p. 374.

with the great Whig lawyer Somers that 'the King's going to a foreign Power, and casting himself into his hands, absolves the People from their Allegiance.'[10] James 'has quitted the government . . . and here is an apparent end of the Government' thought Sir Richard Temple.[11]

There was never any question that the Crown would be filled. The experience, memories, and myths of the Cromwellian interregnum convinced the vast majority that a republican commonwealth was closer to purgatory than Zion. Commons and Lords alike, deeply committed as they were to ideas of hierarchy and patriarchy, rigidly held to the need for monarchy—for a single fount of authority and a parental figure to lead, educate, order, and protect. Yet though these were conservative revolutionaries there was no realistic chance of restoring James. As the Whig Wharton put it, James 'is not our King. 'Tis not for mine, nor the interest of most here, that he should come again.' Consequently, Wharton believed that 'Abdication and Direliction are hard words to me, but I would have no loop-hole to let in the King.'[12] This was a vital issue for, if the throne was empty, the choice (in so far as there was one) of a successor depended in part upon the way it was deemed to have been vacated. Was James's flight to be interpreted as desertion, 'death', or abdication? More important, by what authority was the vacant throne to be filled: by right of conquest, by right of succession, or by right of Parliament? At this stage there was a determination to avoid seeing the Revolution as treasonous rebellion and few discussed events in terms of invasion and conquest. But if the Crown was to be filled by hereditary right, then to exclude the claim of the infant Prince but to allow that of Mary was also highly problematic (this was one function of the absurd warming-pan myth—that a healthy baby had been smuggled into the bed of James's allegedly barren wife, Mary of Modena). Yet, equally, there was a great reluctance among parliamentarians to admit that the Crown might pass to William and Mary through a vote at Westminster. As the former Solicitor General Heneage Finch put it, 'No man will say the Monarchy is elective, let the Administration be ever so ill'.[13] To most a

[10] A. Grey, *Debates of the House of Commons, from the Year 1667 to the Year 1694*, 10 vols. (1763), vol. 9, p. 17. John Somers, 1651–1716, educated Trinity College, Oxford, defended the seven Bishops in 1688, MP 1689, member of the Whig Kit-Cat club, created Baron Somers 1697, Lord Chancellor 1697–1700, Lord President of the Council 1708–10, a noted bibliophile.

[11] Grey, *Debates*, vol. 9, p. 10.

[12] Grey, *Debates*, vol. 9, p. 11. Thomas Wharton, 1648–1715, MP from 1673, joined William 1688, Comptroller of the Household 1689–1702, succeeded to barony 1696, dismissed at Queen Anne's accession, leading Whig magnate of her reign, created 1st Earl 1706 and Marquis of Wharton 1715, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland 1708–10, loved horse racing and rakishness.

[13] Grey, *Debates*, vol. 9, p. 18. Heneage Finch, 1647?–1719, educated Christ Church, Oxford, Solicitor General 1679–86, one of counsel for the seven Bishops in 1688, created Baron Guernsey and Privy Councillor 1703, created Earl of Aylesford 1714.

monarch was God's earthly representative, chosen by Him for the benefit of His people. For men to meddle in that choice was to tamper with the divine order, the inevitable price of which was chaos.

As is clear, there could be no logical or universally acceptable way out of the position in which the Convention found itself in late January 1689. It effectively had to assign priorities to its preferences and then paper over the cracks. For the majority, the main priority was to offer the Crown to William and Mary to prevent a restoration and to provide reliable, much-needed kingship. The Commons decided that this could be best achieved by adopting a ragbag resolution on 28 January that James 'having endeavoured to subvert the Constitution . . . by breaking the Original Contract between King and People; and, by the Advice of Jesuits, and other wicked Persons, having violated the fundamental Laws; and having with-drawn himself out of the Kingdom; hath abdicated the Government; and that the Throne is thereby vacant.'[14] At first the assertion that James had abdicated went too far for the Lords to agree to, not least because James denied it. They were also more tender on the issues of an original contract, hereditary rights, rebellion, and any hint that the monarchy might be elective. Consequently, they preferred 'deserted' to 'abdicated' and wanted to exclude from the resolution that the throne was vacant. Some believed James still to be King, though it seems clear that many Lords did not want him back given the unanimous agreement of both Houses on 29 January to a resolution that it was 'inconsistent with the Safety and Welfare of the Protestant Religion, to be governed by a Popish Prince', a position at loggerheads with a belief in strict hereditary succession.[15] By a majority of 52 to 47 the Lords voted on 31 January against offering the throne to William and Mary. But gradually they were forced by circumstances (the positions taken by William, Mary, and Anne), internal divisions, and self-interest reluctantly to accept the Commons' position. William and Mary were offered the throne on 13 February.

On 11 April William and Mary were crowned at Westminster by Compton, the Bishop of London. The absence of the Archbishop of Canterbury, some other bishops, and a number of judges demonstrated the magnitude of the revolution that had taken place and that serious divisions still existed. Crowning the Prince and Princess of Orange by parliamentary authority was the consequence of a conquest. The line of male primogeniture was broken and the new monarch's authority rested briefly upon military might and more permanently upon the wishes of the majority of the political elite expressed through a legislature with a dubious claim to legitimacy. To that extent the Crown had indeed

[14] *Journals of the House of Commons*, 10 (1688–93), p. 14.
[15] *Journals of the House of Lords*, 14 (1685–91), p. 110.

been made elective. But this also shows just how determined Lords and Commons were quickly to establish a new monarchy which enjoyed reasonably widespread consent. Parliament fell in behind William and Mary in 1689 because they wanted a Protestant monarch, because James had so alienated opinion that he lacked significant support, because the English government depended upon a supreme monarch to direct the nation, and because there was a largely unspoken determination to avoid civil war. Contemporaries marvelled at it all. Tillotson, the future Archbishop of Canterbury, thought 'It was a wonderful *Deliverance* indeed, if we consider all the Circumstances of it: The *Greatness* of it; and the *Strangeness* of the *Means* whereby it was brought about; and the *Suddenness* and *Easiness* of it.'[16] But, as was soon discovered, it was one thing to establish the new regime, quite another to secure it. That was to be a long and painful process, full of doubt and rich in anxiety.

## THE REVOLUTION IN PARLIAMENT

To crown William and Mary was a dynastic revolution with important but not necessarily revolutionary implications for the constitution. In England it was a strikingly limited affair, more akin to a palace coup than a popular uprising. That it was part of a wider and prolonged constitutional revolution was due to William's original reasons for invading England, his steadfast adherence to those Dutch motives, and his dependence upon Parliament for satisfying them. Such has not always been the view. It was a commonplace through much of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to view the offer of the Crown to William and Mary as conditional, as dependent upon their acceptance of a new coronation oath and, especially, the Declaration of Rights. Here, it was said, was a contract, perhaps informed by Lockean ideas of sovereignty. Writing in 1790 Burke believed that 'If the *principles* of the Revolution of 1688 are any where to be found, it is in the statute called the *Declaration of Right* . . . This Declaration . . . is the cornerstone of our constitution'.[17] By specifying the wrongs of James and the rights of the people, it is often claimed that the Declaration heralded a fundamental shift of beliefs and power towards Parliament and away from the executive.

The Declaration of Rights was drafted largely in the Commons and was presented to William and Mary immediately before they were formally offered the Crown on 13 February. Though at that stage William studiously ignored it, later that year it was translated into a statute. It began by detailing twelve evils

[16] *The Works of the Most Reverend Dr John Tillotson, Lord Archbishop of Canterbury*, ed. T. Birch, 3 vols. (1752), vol. 1, p. 300.

[17] E. Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, ed. C. C. O'Brien (Harmondsworth, 1976), p. 100.

committed by James—by implication no monarch should behave in any of these ways—including keeping an army during peacetime (the standing army controversy), interfering in parliamentary elections and suspending laws without the consent of Parliament. Thirteen 'undoubted rights and liberties' in opposition to these and other evils were then listed. These say so much about political perceptions among the elite that they are worth detailing.[18]

*. . . the said lords spiritual and temporal, and commons . . . for the vindicating and asserting their ancient rights and liberties, declare;*

*1. That the pretended power of suspending of laws, or the execution of laws, by regal authority, without consent of Parliament, is illegal.*

*2. That the pretended power of dispensing with laws, or the execution of laws, by regal authority, as it hath been assumed and exercised of late, is illegal.*

*3. That the commission for erecting the late court of commissioners for ecclesiastical causes, and all other commissions and courts of like nature are illegal and pernicious.*

*4. That levying money for or to the use of the crown, by pretence of prerogative, without grant of Parliament, for longer time, or in other manner than the same is or shall be granted, is illegal.*

*5. That it is the right of the subjects to petition the King, and all commitments and prosecutions for such petitioning are illegal.*

*6. That the raising or keeping a standing army within the kingdom in time of peace, unless it be with consent of Parliament, is against law.*

*7. That the subjects which are protestants, may have arms for their defence suitable to their conditions, and as allowed by law.*

*8. That election of members of Parliament ought to be free.*

*9. That the freedom of speech, and debates or proceedings in parliament, ought not to be impeached or questioned in any court or place out of parliament.*

*10. That excessive bail ought not to be required, nor excessive fines imposed; nor cruel and unusual punishments inflicted.*

*11. That jurors ought to be duly impanelled and returned, and jurors which pass upon men in trials for high treason ought to be freeholders.*

*12. That all grants and promises of fines and forfeitures of particular persons before conviction, are illegal and void.*

*13. And that for redress of all grievances, and for amending, strengthening and preserving of the laws, parliaments ought to be held frequently.*

The Declaration stressed that these were 'the true, ancient, and indubitable rights and liberties of the people', though in fact they were mostly inspired by concerns over the ways Charles II and James II had ruled. Certainly the Declaration reiterated old rights rather than invented new ones, laying more weight, by implication, upon precedence than abstract reasoning—this was a triumph of history not of Lockean contractarianism. Many of these thirteen

[18] Williams (ed.), *The Eighteenth-Century Constitution*, pp. 28–9.

points were, moreover, vague, allowing plenty of scope for varied interpretation, just as others were soon ignored by William. Nor did the Declaration require a fundamental change in the constitutional balance between executive and legislature. Nevertheless, by specifying via statute what had previously been frequently unwritten expectations, by being part of the offer of the Crown, and by being a thoroughly worked out compromise, the Declaration was a fundamental document of what contemporaries called not the 'Glorious Revolution' but the 'happy Revolution'. Indeed, that both the House of Lords and William accepted it tardily suggests that they at least saw it as challenging their authority.

After 1688 no monarch however popular could rule as Charles II had ruled or as James II had tried to rule. Yet this was not because princely wings had been clipped by the Declaration of Rights. Indeed, all monarchs after 1688 had more power at their disposal than had James because they were Protestants, had at least the passive support of the bulk of the nation, and because they were prepared to rule through Parliament. This last aspect was especially important, for whereas James had rightly seen Parliament as a potential check to his authority, after 1688 the legislature was a vital means of exercising the royal will (albeit frequently through ministerial intermediaries). Neither Parliament nor monarch were supine after 1688, nor were they always in harmony, but they did develop a way of working together that stood in dramatic contrast to the pre-Revolution order. Though both monarchical and legislative authority was strengthened as a consequence of the Revolution, Parliament benefited disproportionately. In three dramatic ways its position within English life was transformed and a new political morphology developed: it met more frequently and conducted a much greater volume of business; much politics was party based and rested upon carefully articulated ideologies; and finally because of the Triennial Act of 1694 this was an era of remarkable electoral activity, helping to forge important links between central and local politics.

William came to England primarily to assist Dutch foreign policy and once crowned his objectives were to secure his authority within Britain (by subduing Scotland and Ireland) and make England contribute to his continental war effort. For both he needed men and money which only Parliament could provide. The old medieval hope that the King should 'live of his own', from the income of his own lands and certain other revenues, had been wishful thinking since Henry VIII's vain expeditions to France in the early sixteenth century. The House of Commons, which held sole responsibility for framing measures dealing with public finance, was well aware of the strength of its hand here, well remembering its foolish generosity to James in 1685 in granting him revenues for life. As one MP put it to the Commons, 'You have an infallible security for the administration of the Government: All the Revenue is in your

hands . . . and you may keep that back.'[19] For Parliament met at the behest of the monarch; elections were called by the Crown (though limited by the Triennial Act) and sessions begun and ended at their whim. Yet a parsimonious Parliament could ensure that they were called and courted with some predictability. Initially William was not given a civil list and was granted revenues sufficient to cover only a year's expenditure, forcing him to call Parliament annually, thereby making it a much more significant feature of the government of England.

Between the Restoration of Charles II in 1660 and the Revolution in 1688 six Parliaments were elected and they met for twenty-two sessions. But the majority of these sessions lasted less than ten weeks, far too little time decisively to resolve contentious political issues or to pass a considerable body of legislation, incapacities that were especially marked in the decade before the Glorious Revolution when conflict between monarch and legislature was frequently intense. A dramatic change followed 1688. Annual parliamentary sessions averaging twenty weeks became the norm, producing a major impact upon the volume of legislation. From 1660 to 1688 Parliament passed 564 statutes; between 1689 and the accession of George II 2,510—a rise from an average of just 19 per year before 1688 to 66 thereafter. Parliament as a legislature had come of age and whereas previously it had been an occasional event it was now a permanent institution. This transformation rested far less on general or public acts than might be imagined. Measures to tax, raise armies, and the like were of course passed and of considerable significance. And certainly between 1689 and the passage of the Septennial Act in 1716 a series of major public and constitutional statutes were enacted that laid much of the framework for the conduct of political and the religious society until the constitutional changes of the second quarter of the nineteenth century. But most legislation, about two-thirds, was local or even personal in scope, such as that allowing landed estates to be reordered, workhouses to be built, and bridges to be constructed. Such particularism, however, had important general consequences. Not least the Commons became a means available to MPs, local communities, and specific interests to air grievances, great and small, national and parochial, and attempt their legislative solution. In that way, the centre and locality and the general and specific became much better connected one to another after 1688, easing some of the sources of friction which had existed through the seventeenth century between central executive authority and local powerbrokers.

Such legislative fertility was not, however, without its problems for it might erode some of the bases of the commonplace reverence for the rule of law. If

[19] Grey, *Debates*, vol. 9, p. 36.

some saw the law as an ass—inconsistent, incomplete, and unjust—most saw the common law as a sacred inheritance and the courts a vital safeguard of liberty and property. This did not change after 1688, but the proliferation of statute law raised questions about Parliament and the permanence of the law. Some bemoaned encroachments upon the common law and worried that the ancient inheritance of fundamental law was being subverted. Certainly contemporaries were inclined to view Parliament's jurisdiction as vast. As Defoe put it in 1705, Parliament has 'an Unbounded Unlimited Reach, a kind of Infinite attends their Power'.[20] Whigs enthusiastically embraced such a position, though many Tories remained attached to the supremacy of regal authority. Celebrating Parliament, Addison, echoing Locke, argued that 'Every one knows, who has consider'd the Nature of Government, that there must be in each particular Form of it an absolute and unlimited Power; and that this Power is lodg'd in the Hands of those who have the making of its Laws'.[21]

The dramatic increase in the frequency and length of parliamentary sessions, and of the volume of legislation considered, was one of the main aspects of the revolution in Parliament in these years. A second arose in connection to the responsibilities heaped on the shoulders of parliamentarians. After 1688 membership of the Commons came to be viewed differently. Previously the work of an MP was intermittent and usually light; the duties of representation were not considerable. After the accession of William, the business of the House demanded that a significant proportion of the 513 MPs (558 after the Union with Scotland in 1707) were active, while the greater frequency of elections and the incidence of contests also changed the nature (and the expense) of the unsalaried job. Parliamentarians now had to spend up to half the year in London, keeping a second house there. While there, moreover, they were withdrawn from direct involvement in their local affairs and responsibility there devolved or shifted to others. In that way the growth of parliamentary government after the Revolution contributed to something of a decline of elite involvement in local government, formal or informal, with their place being partly taken by others, often of a lesser social rank.

## AN AGE OF ELECTORAL POLITICS

In 1689 England's political elite were sure that both frequent meetings of and frequent elections to Parliament were vital safeguards of good government—though quite what was meant by 'frequent' was a matter of some dispute. In 1716 one MP, looking back over a generation used to annual sessions and

[20] *Defoe's Review*, facsimile edn., 22 vols. (New York, 1938), vol. 5, p. 388.
[21] J. Addison, *The Freeholder*, ed. J. Leheny (Oxford, 1979), p. 107.

triennial Parliaments, believed that 'We are guarded by our representatives in parliament, against any arbitrary encroachments of the supreme executive power; and by frequent and new parliaments, against the weakness, folly, and corruption of our representatives'.[22] Only frequent elections purified the House of Commons, acting as a check on the invidious disease of court corruption —by education, manners, and wealth the Lords were supposedly already immune. Electors could be trusted to oust those MPs who, dependent on the Crown, gave priority to personal preferment. (Certainly there was some considerable turnover of MPs, only a quarter of those in William's last Parliament had sat in his first.) Furthermore, only through frequent meetings could Parliament scrutinize the workings and policies of the executive, attention that was felt to be doubly necessary when the nation was engaged in expensive foreign war. Parliament did not, it must be stressed, want to direct the war effort—initially at least, all matters of foreign affairs and the making of war and peace it recognized as prerogatives of the Crown—but it did want to audit levels of expenditure.

In such a climate the passage of the Triennial Act in 1694, limiting the length of each Parliament to three years, was of less significance than the raising of the limit to seven years with the passage of the Septennial Act in 1716. But the reality of frequent, short-lived Parliaments was a novelty in 1694, just as the absence of so-called place measures to keep Crown office holders out of the Commons left it liable to executive influence. That the Triennial Act was necessary is some indication of the uncertainty then felt by the political nation about the role of the legislature and the will of the monarch. In 1694 minds were being cast forward to the prospect of peace, when William would have reduced financial requirements and less need of Parliament. In fact the Act was a sign of Parliament's conviction that it ought to regulate its own constitutional position, not least because William was not entirely to be trusted. It was never forgotten that he was a foreigner with European commitments, preferring to surround himself with familiar Dutch faces rather than the cream of English society. Certainly William unsuccessfully opposed the Triennial Act, though it is unlikely that he would ever have eschewed annual sessions.

Frequent elections, however, were time-consuming, expensive, and divisive, providing the ideal climate for the gestation of party conflicts and stylized political instability—and similarly frequent local municipal elections heightened such pressures in many towns. Party politics was certainly not invented in the England of William and Anne, but it did assume a significance that worried many. Paraphrasing the Whig argument in 1716 in favour of the Septennial Bill, Walter Moyle told Horace Walpole 'that the Triennial Act

[22] W. Cobbett (ed.), *The Parliamentary History of England*, 36 vols. (1806–20), vol. 7, p. 330.

never answer'd the ends at first propos'd by it; that it serv'd for no other end, but to keep alive our animosities, which by the short intervals between elections had not time to cool; and that it debauch'd the common people's morals and principles, and made them capable of the worst impressions, and ruin'd the gentry, who by the frequent returns of elections were put to great expences, and become slaves to the populace'. For their part the Tories 'harrangued on the topicks of liberty, and said that frequent elections were the safety of the kingdom, by placing proper checks on the crown, minister, and even the House of Commons itself; that to repeal this bill, was in effect to own the king could not trust his people'.[23]

Between the Glorious Revolution and the Septennial Act, general elections took place on average every two years, giving a very distinctive hue to the political and constitutional histories of these years. Moreover, frequent elections were joined by more frequent contests, amending but by no means overturning earlier practice whereby MPs were usually selected by the machinations of local bigwigs than elected by voters. Even so, in the fifteen general elections between 1689 and 1727 an average of just 37 per cent of constituencies were contested at the polls, ranging from a low of 23 per cent in 1689 to a high of 53 per cent in 1722—even when there were contests, moreover, the turnout of voters was often low. Yet if in most cases electors had no opportunity to cast their votes (each voter had two) they could influence the choice of their representatives in other ways and the absence of a contest does not mean that there was not frequently fierce political debate. A distinction should be drawn between political divisions within constituencies and contested elections because, before the nineteenth century, constituencies returned two members and Whigs and Tories might agree to take one seat each, obviating the need of a contest with all of its costs. It was also often the case that in counties electors often gathered well before polling day to express their preferences, at which point candidates who appeared to have insufficient support might retire gracefully from the fray, saving face as well as money. But if a democratic element might exist even when there were no contests, sometimes the democratic element was non-existent, especially because of the influence of members of the House of Lords upon the composition of the Commons. By the end of Anne's reign, for example, nearly 60 borough MPs were nominated to their seats by peers and some 32 MPs were from families of the English peerage (there was some overlap between these two groups). Peers, moreover, often attempted to

[23] W. Coxe, *Memoirs of the Life and Administration of Sir Robert Walpole*, 3 vols. (1798), vol. 2, p. 63. Moyle, 1672–1721, MP for Saltash 1695–98, a noted political theorist. Walpole, 1678–1757, younger brother of Robert Walpole, Fellow, King's College, Cambridge, 1702, MP from 1702, Ambassador to The Hague 1722 and Paris 1723–30, Privy Councillor 1730, created Baron Walpole 1756.

influence the electorate in both boroughs and counties. Small boroughs were especially liable to such manipulation, though even they could be difficult to control, prompting some to call for the abolition or reform of such constituencies, others to stamp out bribery at elections.

The right to vote was strictly limited and generally available only to the upper reaches of society. Men aged 21 and over could vote in the fifty-two county constituencies of England and Wales if they held freehold property worth forty shillings per annum; in the 217 borough constituencies a patchwork of voting rights existed, based variously upon property, residence, membership of the corporation, and freemen. Only in some boroughs did artisans, craftsmen, and shopkeepers have votes. All told for England in 1701 there were perhaps 118,000 county electors and 70,000 borough electors, though even where there were contests many of those eligible to vote did not do so. The right to vote reflected neither the distribution of population nor that of income and wealth, just as the map of constituencies was unevenly spread. Borough seats were especially common in south-west England and very sparse in parts of the north. Each county, whatever its size or population, returned two members. Consequently, the counties of Wales had one MP per 875 voters, whereas in England the ratio was one per 2,000 voters. The addition of Scottish members in 1707 brought a further anomaly, with a ratio there of one MP per 60 voters.[24] However, to the late seventeenth-century mind disproportional representation was natural and needed little justification. This was an age which only infrequently heard the call for the redistribution of seats or of the franchise.

## TOLERATION AND THE RELIGIOUS SETTLEMENT

The domestic causes of the Glorious Revolution centred on the religious basis of political society. Changing monarchs entailed the conclusive rejection of the principle that a nation followed the faith of its ruler, not vice versa. Deep anxiety about that relationship had been commonplace in the century and a half since the Henrician reformation but a *modus vivendi* had usually been found. Under James, however, it was not, largely because his religion was not that of the overwhelming majority of his people. His Catholicism and his favouring of Roman Catholicism engendered much hostility and met substantial passive resistance. By the summer of 1688 an impasse had been reached which only evolved into crisis with the birth of his son on the 10th of June.

[24] As Scotland had 45 MPs and a population of 1.2m, and England and Wales 513 MPs and a combined population of *c*.5.3m, the ratio of voters to MPs north of the border is explained by so few men being able to vote there.

Until then English hopes were kept alive by the prospect that at his death James would be succeeded by his Anglican daughter, Mary. But now, with a Catholic heir (the young Prince's godfathers were the Pope and Louis XIV), a permanent disjunction between the faith of monarch and people looked inevitable. It was this environment which William gambled upon when he made his descent, though his accession failed to settle the religious issues conclusively.

In the second half of the seventeenth century Anglicanism, the established Church adhered to by the majority of people, co-existed far from easily with a number of fairly small religious groups, of which the most important were Roman Catholics, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Baptists, and Quakers. Such pluralism existed despite widespread distrust of heterodoxy. Memories of the abolition of episcopacy, the rule of the Saints, and the proliferation of sects during the interregnum, were still strong and to many religious orthodoxy was seen as an essential buttress to an orderly civil society. Certainly the Church of England provided, through its parochial structure, an important conduit of ideas and policies from the centre. Before 1689 pulpits resounded to acclamations of monarchy, hierarchy, order, and obligation, a potent ideology few could fail to hear. Furthermore, the close association of Church and State re-established after the Restoration was reconfirmed by subsequent statutes, particularly the Test and Corporation Acts. Office in civil and military government was reserved for communicants of the Church of England, thereby pushing many Dissenters and all Catholics to the margins of society (some Dissenters swallowed both pride and principles, occasionally conforming in order to hold office).

Though the Glorious Revolution was viewed by many as enabling the restoration of the supremacy of the established Church they were soon disappointed. Vital to this was William's own religious predilections as an unenthusiastic Calvinist. Moreover, for him the issue was not merely English, but also British and European. Not least, nervous about the security of the regime, he wished to tie closely to it as many as possible. All Protestants in Scotland and Ireland needed wedding to the new regime, and allies in Europe, actual and potential, needed to be assured that the new Anglo-Dutch connection was not merely insular Anglicanism writ large. In England William initially flowed with the tide of extreme anti-Catholicism, reconfirming in the middle of January 1689 an order banishing Catholics not normally resident in London at least ten miles from the capital. Behind the scenes, however, he adopted a far more conciliatory stance, promising to make concessions to English Catholics in order to secure recognition by and strengthen his alliance with Austria and Spain. With regard to Dissenters he also shifted ground. His Declaration stated that he hoped the free Parliament he aimed to institute would make 'such other laws . . . as may establish a good agreement between the Church of

England and all Protestant Dissenters; as also for the covering and securing of all such, who would live peaceably under the government, as becomes good subjects, from all persecution on account of their Religion, even Papists themselves not excepted'. But by March 1689 he urged Parliament to consider the 'Admission [to public office] of *all* Protestants that are willing and able to serve.'[25] This shift was partly produced by William's personal inclinations, partly by his reactions to expressions of loyalty from Dissenters to the new regime, partly by the ways Dissenters and moderate Anglicans, looking for a mutual accommodation, attempted to redraw the legal bases of Protestantism as a whole in the first half of 1689. To them the dynastic revolution and the role of the Convention therein meant that any part of the constitution might be reconsidered, especially what they saw as the excessively narrow Restoration religious settlement.

Early in 1689 three overlapping options for redrawing the statutory basis of the Church of England's supremacy were considered in Parliament: the abolition of the requirement that office holders take the sacramental test; the redrawing of the boundaries of that Church to incorporate moderate Dissenters (so-called 'Comprehension'); and allowing other Dissenters freedom of worship. All of these touched a very raw nerve, offering as they did a head-on challenge to the Anglican supremacy. Moreover, to Churchmen and their supporters they appeared to be the very negation of the basis of the Glorious Revolution which had so tested their fundamental beliefs and assumptions. To them protecting the pre-1685 basis of the establishment in Church and State had been the main reason for their abandonment of James in November and December 1688. In their eyes the new regime was to restore the *status quo ante*, not to reform in favour of some broader Protestant hegemony. Consequently, battle was joined in Parliament over the three options for change. As Anglicans in favour of the *status quo ante* just held a majority there it was to be expected that resistance would be stiff. Repeal of the Corporation Act and an attempt to enlarge the Church to incorporate moderate Dissenters both failed, but Toleration was enacted. Comprehension would have rendered repeal unnecessary and so its failure was especially important. More significant still, Comprehension and Toleration were conceived as twin pillars of a new establishment in Church and State. As originally envisaged Toleration aimed only to deal with those few Dissenters who would be left outside the Church after Comprehension. The failure of the latter, however, now meant that Toleration had to apply to large groups within society and was burdened with an importance it was ill-designed for.

[25] Williams (ed.), *The Eighteenth-Century Constitution*, p. 16; *Journals of the House of Lords*, 14 (1685–91), p. 150 (emphasis added).

Almost unintentionally the Toleration Act, which obtained the royal assent in late May 1689, was one of the most important parts of the Revolution settlement. At first blush, its terms appear modest, allowing those Protestants outside the established Church who had taken the oaths of Allegiance and Supremacy and who formally rejected transubstantiation the freedom to worship in their own meeting-houses. Their ministers had to subscribe to most of the Thirty-nine Articles and the meeting-houses had to be registered. Crucially, Toleration offered nothing to non-Christians (such as Jews, Socinians, and Deists) or to Quakers and Catholics. Yet such simple and limited allowances masked great significance. First, the failure to enact Comprehension showed that William could be markedly naive in English affairs. By adopting a pan-European perspective he frequently underestimated the parochialism and intensity of assumptions governing England's political nation. Second, the death of Comprehension was a significant victory for Parliament over prerogative. It vividly demonstrated that the Glorious Revolution was much more than a dynastic affair alone and made fully apparent that it had a vital statutory basis which monarchs could control only to a limited degree. Third, it soon became clear that the passage of Toleration had broken the Anglican hegemony. As John Locke put it, 'Toleration has now at last been established by law in our country. Not perhaps so wide in scope as might be wished for . . . Still, it is something to have progressed so far.'[26] The exclusive relationship between citizenship and Anglicanism was severed. Further, Toleration was associated with liberalization in the religious basis of political society, as in those Dissenters who bypassed the Test and Corporation Acts by resorting to occasional conformity. In practice, moreover, Catholics did gain some benefits from the Act—though other legislation attacked them financially and professionally. According to Burnet 'the papists have enjoyed the real effects of the toleration, though they were not comprehended within the statute that enacted it.'[27] Finally, institutionally the Church was challenged by the proliferation of meeting-houses which followed Toleration. In the first year of the Act's operation 796 temporary and 143 permanent meeting-houses were licensed. By 1710 over 2,500 places were licensed—there were about 9,500 Anglican parish churches. No longer could Anglicanism plausibly claim sole responsibility for the care of souls.

Anglicanism felt constantly threatened and in crisis for many years after 1689, with its champions railing against the Toleration and aiming to turn the clock back to the Restoration religious settlement in place in the 1670s.

[26] *The Correspondence of John Locke*, ed. E. S. de Beer, 8 vols. (Oxford, 1976–89), vol. 3, p. 633.

[27] *History of his Own Time*, vol. 4, p. 22.

Religious issues loomed large in political affairs from Anne's succession until Walpole's ministry in the early 1720s. The lower house of Convocation, though it generally met only briefly, frequently took issue with anything tending towards religious pluralism, often bringing them into conflict with their bishops. From the 1690s moreover the Tories strove to re-establish the Anglican hegemony, particularly by outlawing occasional conformity, which was done by Act in 1711, and attempting to reduce the influence of Dissenters in many aspects of public life. For example, by the Schism Act of 1714 educational provision was largely brought under Anglican control in the hope that Dissent, if unable to reproduce itself, would tend towards extinction.

## FORGING LOYALTY

When William invaded England he knew that the overwhelming majority of the political nation had originally sworn allegiance to James II. The importance of this is difficult to exaggerate, for oath taking was a solemn and sacred engagement, ended only by death and thus capable of providing 'the strongest ligaments of human societies'.[28] William had, therefore, to hope that the political nation would break their vows and though in the winter of 1688–9 most disloyalty to James took the form of passive disobedience, this is effectively what happened. Individuals sitting at home watching events unfold as they agonized over their obligations were in fact participating in the crisis. Sadly for them matters were not settled by the offer of the Crown to William and Mary. Because the new monarchs in turn required oaths of allegiance this entailed going beyond earlier passive disobedience to an effective rejection of the prior oaths to James. If some believed that by his flight James had dissolved such oaths, others were less clear. As one cleric worried, 'For a prince, that makes his way to a throne by ye sword, to make ye people swear to his title seems to me a very strange imposition'.[29] The gravity of the tens of thousands of personal crises this created was easily foreseen by the new regime and framing the new oaths was an essential and very delicate task. It was not imagined by William and his advisers that oaths could produce loyalty, but oaths established some of the fundamental boundaries of political society, including some and excluding others. No less significantly, oaths also functioned as interpretations of the Revolution, for their terms reverberated with implications and innuendo.

[28] M. Goldie, 'Thomas Erle's Instructions for the Revolution Parliament, December 1688', *Parliamentary History*, 14 (1995), p. 347.

[29] *Letters of Humphrey Prideaux Sometime Dean of Norwich to John Ellis Sometime Under-Secretary of State 1674–1722*, ed. E. M. Thompson, Camden Society, New Series, 15 (1875), p. 158.

It is notable that the oaths of allegiance and supremacy to William and Mary began their life in the Declaration of Rights. Vitally, the form laid down, '*I . . . do sincerely promise and swear, That I will be faithful, and bear true allegiance, to their Majesties King* William *and Queen* Mary: So help me God', avoided the issue of legitimacy, failing to require either a recognition of the right or legality of William and Mary to be monarchs or a rejection of James's claims.[30] That is, the oath was part and parcel of the Convention's interpretation of the dynastic revolution that sought to accommodate as wide a range of views as possible. This was a highest common denominator oath, drawn up in a spirit of accommodation which demanded as little as possible. By expressing loyalty in *de facto* rather than *de jure* terms, and by simply ignoring James, many tender consciences were salved. Though it was required to be taken by all civil and military office holders and Anglican clerics, the vast majority went along with it, though often only after much mental torture. Thousands upon thousands marched before JPs to take the new oath, even most fellows of Oxford colleges. Many, however, did not, feeling they had to argue through the full consequences. To them, as James still claimed to be King and the oaths made to him could only be broken by his death, to swear to William and Mary as monarchs was impossible. The Earl of Arran put the matter clearly: 'I cannot violate my duty to the King [James], my master. I must distinguish between his popery and his person: I dislike the one; but have sworn and do owe allegiance to the other.'[31]

The most significant body unwilling to take the new oath was about four hundred Anglican clerics. Almost by definition this was a phalanx of men rich in principle and fidelity. Ideals meant more to them than pragmatism. Many were eminent divines, not least Sancroft, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and seven other bishops, some of whom had previously championed the Church in the face of James II's policy of extending toleration. Clerics who refused to take the oath, the so-called non-jurors, were eventually deprived of their benefices and seceded from the Church, sometimes establishing their own alternative congregations.[32] Numerically the non-jurors were insignificant, accounting for perhaps 4 per cent of the Anglican clergy, but they symbolized the trials, tribulations, and shattered hegemony of Anglicanism more generally in the generation after 1688, and their continued presence constantly recalled the fudge at the heart of the Revolution settlement. Moreover, some became active opponents of the new regime, though far from all of these were Jacobites desiring

[30] Williams (ed.), *The Eighteenth-Century Constitution*, p. 29.

[31] J. Dalrymple, *Memoirs of Great Britain and Ireland from the Dissolution of the Last Parliament of Charles II until the Sea-Battle of La Hogue*, 2 vols. (4th edn., Dublin, 1773–88), vol. 1, p. 286.

[32] The non-juring schism is discussed in more detail below, see pp. 216–17.

James's restoration, though only with the death of James in September 1701 did the oaths to which they were committed expire, leaving the way free for some to acknowledge the Revolution regime.

Taking the new oath was a test but it was not much of one and the more enthusiastic supporters of the new order soon pressed for something stiffer, either by recognizing William and Mary by right and/or by abjuring James. If eventually new oaths on these lines were adopted, between 1690 and 1696 a succession of Bills to establish them all failed in the face of considerable opposition. This was not so surprising, for they threatened to open up old wounds and challenge the passive obedience that had hitherto sustained the monarchy reasonably well. But all this changed in 1696 when a plan to assassinate William was uncovered. In this moment of crisis an Association document declaring William 'rightful and lawful' King was drawn up as an act of loyalty (Mary had died in 1694). Subscription to this Association was voluntary, but it was undeniably a test and many in the Commons signed. In the following year the new oath reached the statute book and was to be taken by all new (but not current) office holders, civil and military, and all future members of the Commons. This was a decisive step towards establishing William as a King deserving the same loyalty as previous monarchs and more clearly challenged the prior oaths to James. Yet still there was no requirement to renounce James before he died in 1701 and the requirement to renounce his son only came in 1702, barely two weeks before William's unexpected death, in the face of imminent war with France over the Spanish and British successions following the deaths of the Duke of Gloucester, Charles II of Spain, and James II. At that juncture the irreversibility of the Glorious Revolution was clear enough to most and the triumph of pragmatism over principle sufficiently advanced for traditional commitments of loyalty to the Crown to be demanded. However, the significance of this was much more than a question of loyalty; its implications were profound. It was tantamount to the assertion of the right of Parliament to depose a King and place the Crown on the head of whomsoever they chose. As such it marked a vital step in the transformation of the way the Glorious Revolution was comprehended—that kingship was no unfettered freehold, that there was an elective element in the monarchical succession, and that there had been some resistance in 1688 (passive or active). Finally, after 1688 the currency of oaths was inevitably devalued and the sanctity of political society and obligation eroded. Oaths demonstrated the politics of pleasure as well as principle. 'Our Fathers of old took Oaths, as their Wives, To Have and to Hold, for the Term of their Lives; But we take the Oaths, like a Whore, for our Ease, And a Whore and a Rogue may part when they please.'[33]

[33] *The Weekly Journal, or British Gazetteer*, 21 January 1716, p. 313.

## THE PROTESTANT SUCCESSION

By the Declaration of Rights the monarchical succession was settled in William and Mary for their lives, then the children of Mary, then Anne and her children, and finally upon the children of William should he outlive Mary and have children by another wife. This was clear enough perhaps, but very perilous for in 1689 the joint-monarchs were childless and there was little prospect that this would change. The early death of Mary in 1694 meant that William would be succeeded by his sister-in-law. Anne, who had married George Prince of Denmark in 1683, had given birth to a son and heir, William Duke of Gloucester, in 1689. None of the Princess's six previous pregnancies had been successful, but in 1694 the child was still alive and Anglican hopes were heaped on his narrow shoulders. He was a potential saviour, '*the most hopeful prince*', providentially conceived in the very midst of the crisis of late 1688, a Stuart with some hereditary right to the throne.[34] If he lived then except for Jacobite challenges the succession was pretty well a closed book.

On 24 January 1700 Princess Anne suffered a miscarriage. It was her seventeenth and last pregnancy of which only the Duke of Gloucester survived infancy. Six months later, however, he died, struck down by smallpox at Windsor. The end of the Protestant branch of the Stuart dynasty was now clearly in view; the King and his heir were childless. The succession question was revived and was once again given added urgency by the storm clouds gathering in Europe. As William's health and inclination was against remarriage the two options available were to resort to the strict hereditary succession cast aside in 1689 or, as had been decided with the accession of William and Mary, to favour a Protestant successor. That the latter course was adopted should not mask the fact that some gave serious thought to restoring not James II but his son the Prince of Wales, providing he could be raised in the Anglican faith. Anne herself appears to have been in contact with her father over such a possibility, though probably as a means of keeping clear the path to her own accession. More important, William was committed to settling the succession question before war with France broke out again. He had long been clear that if Anne died childless then the succession should pass to the next Protestant along the line of hereditary succession, to Sophia, dowager Electress of Brunswick-Lüneburg, that is to say to the House of Hanover. He had indeed unsuccessfully attempted to insert a clause to that effect in the Declaration of Rights. Sophia's credentials and pedigree were excellent. Born in 1630 she was the granddaughter of James I of England, a Lutheran, and in 1701 had alive four sons, one daughter, one grandson, and one granddaughter. To pass the

[34] From the Act of Settlement in Williams (ed.), *The Eighteenth-Century Constitution*, p. 57.

succession to her and her heirs was to confirm the link between monarchy and Protestantism, establish a clear future line of descent through three generations, and add weight to England's position on the anti-French side of the European balance of power. Sophia herself did not live to inherit the throne, but her son, George I, did.

William's solution to the succession question was adopted in the Act of Settlement passed in June 1701. Despite the hopes of Jacobites and republicans, settling the succession upon the House of Hanover encountered remarkably little public opposition; indeed in the Commons only one MP spoke against it. Further, Catholics were once again explicitly debarred from the throne. The Bill passed both Houses without division and as in 1689 urgency was again the order of the day. Nothing could more clearly show the continued commitment of parliamentarians to the Protestant succession and of their willingness to break with strict hereditary right. As in 1689 a foreign, Protestant King was deemed preferable to a Catholic one: 'it is better to have a Prince from Germany, than one from France.'[35] It was not, however, altogether such plain sailing. The Act of Settlement was passed by a Parliament which had jurisdiction over England, Ireland, and Wales but not Scotland, which had its own independent legislature at Edinburgh. Furthermore, as the Stuart dynasty was of Scottish origin (James VI of Scotland had become James I of England in 1603) the Act of Settlement was interpreted north of the border as yet another example of English presumption, arrogance, indeed imperialism. The call of Scottish independence was soon heard loud and clear. A separate succession was mooted and prevented only by the Union of the two countries in 1707, a Union based upon the loss of Scottish political independence. This was a decisive moment in the creation of a unitary State in Britain. Though the majority of Scottish institutions and customs remained untouched the legislature in Edinburgh was abolished. After 1707 Westminster, where Scottish peers and MPs were in a small minority, provided Scotland with laws and set its taxes. Edinburgh's importance as a capital was thereby reduced and the focal point of Scottish political society moved south. Little wonder that re-establishing Scottish independence became a priority for many north of the border.

It was beyond the capability of the Act of Settlement and Act of Union to end speculation on the question of the succession, not least because of the continued hopes and machinations of Jacobites, most especially in the four years before Anne died. The existence of Jacobitism was, indeed, a defining

[35] *Letters Illustrative of the Reign of William III. From 1696 to 1708. Addressed to the Duke of Shrewsbury by James Vernon, Esq. Secretary of State*, ed. G. P. R. James, 3 vols. (1841), vol. 3, p. 129.

characteristic of the whole of post-Revolution era to the extent that there was nothing inevitable about the monarchical succession which transpired. At almost any point a different path might have been taken. All monarchs on the English throne were faced by a rival claimant who frequently received considerable domestic and international support. Whatever the scale of that support, whatever the chances of reinstating James or crowning his son, the mere possibility of a restoration dramatically influenced the political world. For both Jacobites and their opponents it was a world of gossip, suspicion, and secrecy, a world where reality and invention melded completely. Politics was haunted by spies and plots, risings and rebellions, rioting and disorder. Even those committed to the new regime often made contact with the exiled court, realizing the importance of taking out insurance policies should a restoration eventuate—Marlborough, Harley, and Bolingbroke were prominent among them. Treason and treachery was commonplace, loyalty and probity at a premium. Nor, indeed, was Jacobitism always hidden in the dark. In 1696, 1716, and 1723 the dismembered bodies of executed traitors were put atop Temple Bar in London. Such an environment is far removed from order and the reasoned pursuit of politics. Consequently, though foundation stones were being laid from 1689 onwards, it was not until after the failure of the Jacobite rising and invasion of 1715–16 and the exposure of the Jacobite Atterbury plot in 1722 that high politics took on its distinctively eighteenth-century appearance. Even then, the birth of the 'Young Pretender', Charles, in 1720 and the rising in 1745 kept old issues alive.

## MONARCHICAL AUTHORITY AND PARLIAMENTARY POLITICS

More than the line of succession was determined in 1701 and as the full title of the Act of Settlement suggests, 'An Act for the further limitation of the Crown, and better securing the rights and liberties of the subject', William was the butt of serious criticism.[36] Without embarrassment Parliament introduced clauses into the body of the Act which forcefully pointed up perceived inadequacies in his kingship and worries about the accession of the Hanoverians. Restrictions on future monarchs were imposed that went well beyond those contained in the Declaration of Rights. It was now decided that monarchs had to be Anglicans, not merely Protestants, and that they could only leave their realm with parliamentary consent. This was an implied rebuke of the Calvinist William who spent nearly 40 per cent of his reign abroad, mostly waging war in Flanders

[36] 12 and 13 William III, c. 2.