

However, James's first wife died, and he was married again, this time to a Roman Catholic princess, Mary of Modena. In 1688 Mary gave birth to a son, who would by law succeed his father before his older half-sisters. Since the boy was a Catholic like his father and mother, English Protestants feared a whole line of Catholic rulers on the throne of mostly Protestant England.

Now all the groups who opposed James combined to bring about the event known as the Glorious Revolution. Whigs and Tories agreed that James must abdicate. A number of leading nobles invited James's daughter Mary and her Dutch husband William of Orange to take the throne of England. Although William landed in England with an army in 1688, armed force was hardly necessary. Unable to rally anyone to his support and fearful of assassination, James fled to France. Parliament gave the crown to William III and Mary II as joint rulers.

New Ideas About Government

The English civil war and the events that followed led not only to changes in government but also to new ideas about government. The English philosopher Thomas Hobbes lived through the civil war and was disturbed by the chaos it created. He set forth his political philosophy in a book called *Leviathan*, published in 1651.

Hobbes explained that groups of people first lived in anarchy, what he called a "state of nature." Life was violent and dangerous under these circumstances, so people chose a leader to rule them. In order to maintain a stable society, people made an unwritten "social contract." Hobbes argued that under this contract they had to give the monarch absolute power, or anarchy would again result. The people retained only the right to protect their own lives.

John Locke, another English philosopher, adopted many of Hobbes's ideas but interpreted them differently. Locke supported Parliament in the struggle that led to the overthrow of James II. Earlier, he established the principles on which the supporters of the Glorious Revolution acted in 1688, and in 1690 he published these principles in his *Two Treatises on Civil Government*.

Like Hobbes, Locke believed that people had first lived in a state of anarchy and then made a social contract. However, he believed that people had given up only some of their individual rights

and had kept others. The rights they kept, called **natural rights**, included the right to live, the right to enjoy liberty, and especially the right to own property.

According to Locke, a ruler who violated these rights violated natural law and broke the unwritten social contract. The people had the right to overthrow such a ruler and replace him with another ruler who pledged to observe and protect their rights. Locke thus provided grounds for the people to force James II to leave the throne and for Parliament to offer the crown to William and Mary. Locke's ideas would influence later revolutions in America and France.

Safeguards Against Absolute Rule

Parliament passed safeguards against arbitrary rule as early as the reign of Charles II. In 1679 it passed an important measure, the *Habeas Corpus Act*. This act provided that anyone who was arrested could obtain a writ, or order, demanding to be brought before a judge within a specified period of time. The judge would decide whether the prisoner should be released or charged and tried for a crime. The writ itself was called *habeas corpus*, Latin for "you shall have the body." The Habeas Corpus Act protected individuals against illegal arrest and unlawful imprisonment.

Before granting the throne to William and Mary in 1689, Parliament required them to accept in advance certain fixed conditions named in a document known as the *Bill of Rights*. The Bill of Rights declared that Parliament would choose the ruler, who would be merely an official, subject to parliamentary laws. The ruler could not proclaim or suspend any law, impose any tax, or maintain an army in peacetime without Parliament's consent. Parliament had to meet frequently, and the monarch could not interfere in the elections of its members. The Bill of Rights guaranteed the right of the members of Parliament to express themselves freely.

The Bill of Rights also protected private citizens. All citizens had the right to petition the government for relief of any injustice. In addition, no one could be required to pay excessive bail or be subjected to cruel and unusual punishment.

In 1689 Parliament also passed the *Act of Toleration*. This act granted freedom of conscience and the right of public worship to those Protestants (now called Dissenters) who were not members of

the Anglican church. It did not, however, bring about complete religious freedom. For example, Roman Catholics still lived under heavy restrictions, and no Dissenters could hold public office.

In 1701 Parliament passed the Act of Settlement, designed to keep Roman Catholics off the English throne. The act provided that if William III should die with no children to succeed him, Mary's sister, Anne, would inherit the throne. If Anne had no children, the throne would go to another Protestant granddaughter of James I, the German Electress Sophia of Hanover.

Parliament Rules England

The Bill of Rights and the Act of Settlement marked the end of the long struggle between monarch and Parliament to determine who would rule the country. By 1700, although England remained a monarchy, Parliament held the power. However, Parliament did not represent all the people. Hereditary nobles and higher clergy made up the House of Lords. Even the House of Commons, which was gradually becoming the more powerful of the two houses, was not particularly representative. Only about 15 percent of the male population—the gentry who were landowners and the powerful commercial people—had the right to vote for members of the House of Commons.

In the 50 years following 1689, Parliament continued to gain importance as the real power in the government of England. During this time the organization and institutions characteristic of today's English government gradually emerged.

For centuries, English monarchs had met with advisers to discuss government problems. Beginning in the time of Charles II, a smaller group of advisers began to meet separately. Most of them were ministers, or heads of government departments. They made policy and dealt with issues effectively because they were leaders in Parliament. This group became known as the cabinet.

At first the cabinet included both Whigs and Tories. However, during the reign of William III, it became clear that the government ran more smoothly when most of the ministers of the cabinet belonged to the majority party in the House of Commons. Thus the monarch chose his or her ministers accordingly.

Several additional changes increased parliamentary control of the English government during

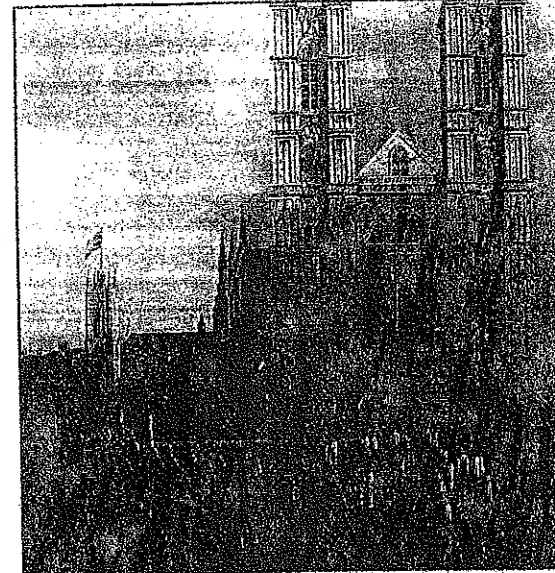
and following the reign of William III: Parliament gained the right to declare war, and the monarch stopped vetoing acts of Parliament. Queen Anne, who reigned from 1702 to 1714, was the last monarch to veto an act of Parliament.

Act of Union

Before he died, William III urged the union of England and Scotland. He perhaps feared that Scottish resentment of rich England might lead the Scots to take sides with France again. In 1707 the Parliaments of England and Scotland passed the Act of Union. This act merged the two countries into one kingdom, known as Great Britain. The act abolished the Scottish Parliament and gave the Scots seats in the English House of Lords and House of Commons.

Learning from Maps In 1707, Parliament united Scotland and England into the kingdom of Great Britain. What cities are outside the kingdom of Great Britain? Dublin; Londonderry





Learning from Pictures George I founded the Knights of the Bath, shown here in a procession at Westminster. What language did George I speak?
German

Some people opposed the union at first, particularly in Scotland, but the union proved beneficial. By removing trade barriers, it encouraged commerce and brought prosperity to both England and Scotland. The Scottish city of Glasgow grew from a fishing village into a great port. The universities of Edinburgh and Glasgow became major centers of learning in Europe during the 1700s.

Parliamentary control increased under the successors to Queen Anne. Queen Anne had 17 children, but none survived her. When she died in 1714, the elector of Hanover succeeded to the throne. Since Sophia of Hanover also died in 1714, her son George I became the first of the Hanoverian dynasty of Great Britain. Both he and his son George II were born in Germany and were unfamiliar with British government and customs. George I, who ruled until 1727, spoke no English. George II, who was king until 1760, spoke fluent English, but with a strong German accent. Although the details of British government interested both kings, neither understood the larger issues. As a result, the cabinet became increasingly important in the British system of government.

A Constitutional Monarchy

For over 20 years—from 1721 to 1742—the Whig party controlled the House of Commons. The

recognized leader of the Whigs, Sir Robert Walpole, always became a minister. Walpole had strong leadership capabilities and came to be recognized as the **prime minister**, first minister, although the early prime ministers usually carried the title of "First Lord of the Treasury." Under the rule of the Hanoverians, the prime minister became the real head of the government and Great Britain became a **limited constitutional monarchy**. It was a monarchy in that a king or queen sat on the throne. It was limited and constitutional in that a constitution limited the monarch's powers, and the monarch had to consult Parliament.

The British constitution is not a single written document like that of the United States. It consists partly of great documents that include among others the Magna Carta, the Petition of Right, and the Bill of Rights. It also includes acts of Parliament, which any succeeding Parliament may change. Several features of the British governmental system have never been written down; for example, the powers of the prime minister and the functions of the cabinet are based largely on tradition. The prime minister rather than the monarch selects the other members of the cabinet. Together the prime minister and the cabinet plan and carry out government policy.

Great Britain is one of the oldest constitutional governments in the world today. Its limited monarchy became a model for governments of many other nations, and the British experience became a guide to those who wanted to abolish absolute monarchy elsewhere.