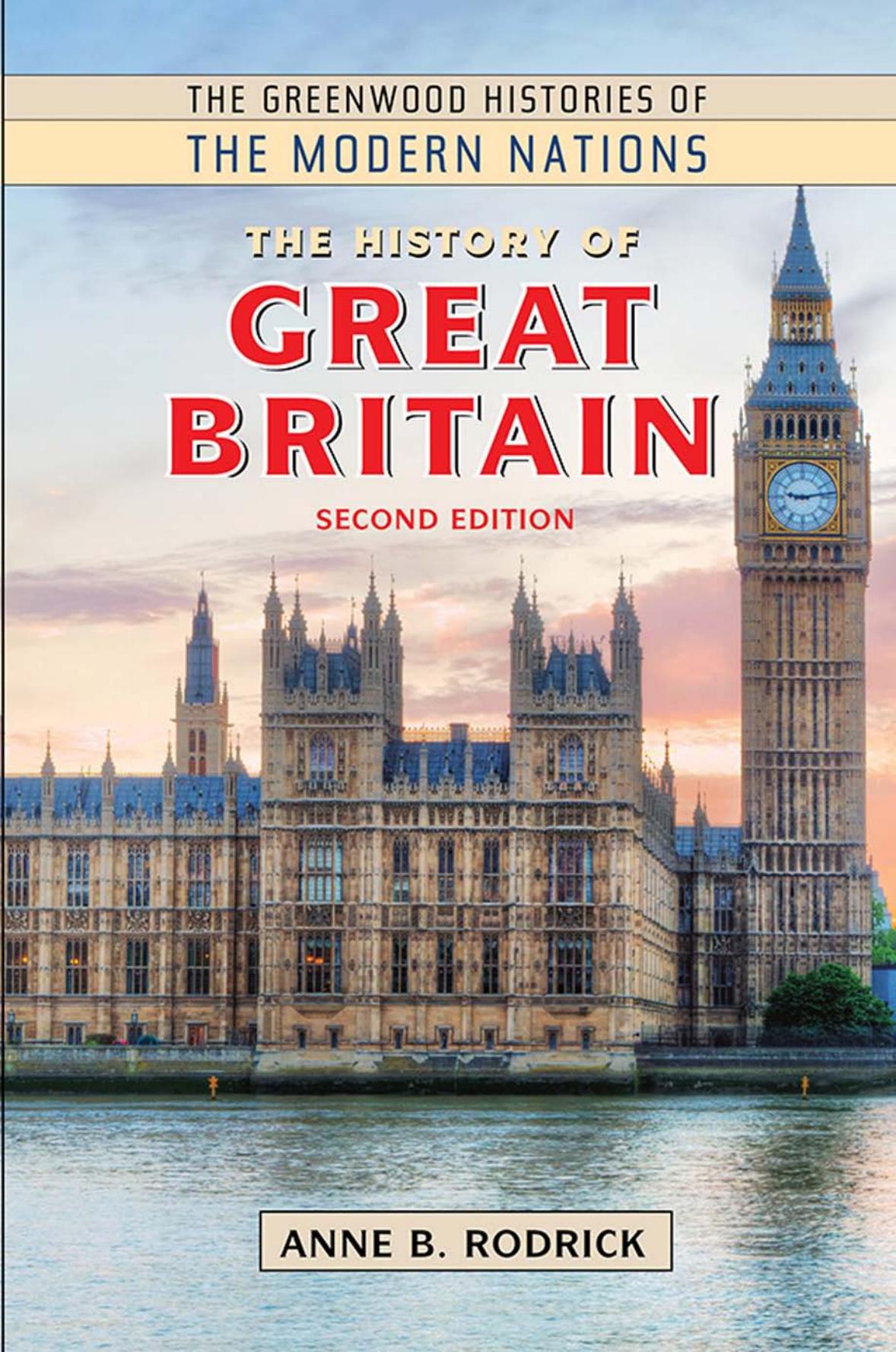


THE GREENWOOD HISTORIES
OF
THE MODERN NATIONS

THE HISTORY OF
**GREAT
BRITAIN**

SECOND EDITION



ANNE B. RODRICK

THE
HISTORY OF
GREAT BRITAIN

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THE HISTORY OF GREAT BRITAIN

Second Edition

Anne B. Rodrick

The Greenwood Histories of the Modern Nations
Frank W. Thackeray and John E. Findling, Series Editors



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Series Foreword

The Greenwood Histories of the Modern Nations series is intended to provide students and interested laypeople with up-to-date, concise, and analytical histories of many of the nations of the contemporary world. Not since the 1960s has there been a systematic attempt to publish a series of national histories, and as series editors, we believe that this series will prove to be a valuable contribution to our understanding of other countries in our increasingly interdependent world.

At the end of the 1960s, the Cold War was an accepted reality of global politics. The process of decolonization was still in progress, the idea of a unified Europe with a single currency was unheard of, the United States was mired in a war in Vietnam, and the economic boom in Asia was still years in the future. Richard Nixon was president of the United States, Mao Tse-tung (not yet Mao Zedong) ruled China, Leonid Brezhnev guided the Soviet Union, and Harold Wilson was prime minister of the United Kingdom. Authoritarian dictators still controlled most of Latin America, the Middle East was reeling in the wake of the Six-Day War, and Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi was at the height of his power in Iran.

Since then, the Cold War has ended, the Soviet Union has vanished, leaving 15 independent republics in its wake, the advent of the

computer age has radically transformed global communications, the rising demand for oil makes the Middle East still a dangerous flash-point, and the rise of new economic powers like the People's Republic of China and India threatens to bring about a new world order. All of these developments have had a dramatic impact on the recent history of every nation of the world.

For this series, which was launched in 1998, we first selected nations whose political, economic, and socio-cultural affairs marked them as among the most important of our time. For each nation, we found an author who was recognized as a specialist in the history of that nation. These authors worked cooperatively with us and with Greenwood Press to produce volumes that reflected current research on their nations and that are interesting and informative to their readers. In the first decade of the series, close to 50 volumes were published, and some have now moved into second editions.

The success of the series has encouraged us to broaden our scope to include additional nations, whose histories have had significant effects on their regions, if not on the entire world. In addition, geopolitical changes have elevated other nations into positions of greater importance in world affairs and, so, we have chosen to include them in this series as well. The importance of a series such as this cannot be underestimated. As a superpower whose influence is felt all over the world, the United States can claim a "special" relationship with almost every other nation. Yet many Americans know very little about the histories of nations with which the United States relates. How did they get to be the way they are? What kind of political systems have evolved there? What kind of influence do they have on their own regions? What are the dominant political, religious, and cultural forces that move their leaders? These and many other questions are answered in the volumes of this series.

The authors who contribute to this series write comprehensive histories of their nations, dating back, in some instances, to prehistoric times. Each of them, however, has devoted a significant portion of their book to events of the past 40 years because the modern era has contributed the most to contemporary issues that have an impact on U.S. policy. Authors make every effort to be as up-to-date as possible so that readers can benefit from discussion and analysis of recent events.

In addition to the historical narrative, each volume contains an introductory chapter giving an overview of that country's geography, political institutions, economic structure, and cultural attributes. This is meant to give readers a snapshot of the nation as it exists in

the contemporary world. Each history also includes supplementary information following the narrative, which may include a timeline that represents a succinct chronology of the nation's historical evolution, biographical sketches of the nation's most important historical figures, and a glossary of important terms or concepts that are usually expressed in a foreign language. Finally, each author prepares a comprehensive bibliography for readers who wish to pursue the subject further.

Readers of these volumes will find them fascinating and well written. More importantly, they will come away with a better understanding of the contemporary world and the nations that comprise it. As series editors, we hope that this series will contribute to a heightened sense of global understanding as we move through the early years of the twenty-first century.

Frank W. Thackeray and John E. Findling
Indiana University Southeast

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Preface

On June 24, 2016, Britons awoke to the news that, by a narrow margin, the country had voted to leave the European Union. “Brexit” is scheduled to take effect on March 29, 2019. This change, coming as it does after decades of often-reluctant membership in the European Union, has prompted serious introspection about what it means to be British. Readers of this volume will see, however, that such introspection is nothing new. Britain has for many decades wrestled with the tensions of a historical past that literally spanned the globe, and the isolationism that propelled the Brexiters to victory in 2016 exists alongside both complex remnants of colonialism and an ambitious modern globalism. This updated edition will undoubtedly be incomplete within a few years of its publication, as the country will have to respond in new ways to the unpredictable economic and social pressures of a new isolationism. However, it attempts to incorporate the significant changes of the past 20 years into a narrative that reflects the shape of Britain’s ongoing—indeed, perpetual—task of self-definition. In several places, especially those describing current statistical trends, this narrative will also reflect the whole of the United Kingdom, but for the most part this history will focus on Great Britain proper—that is, England, Scotland, and Wales—and its place within the rise and fall of the larger empire.

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Timeline of Historical Events

55–54 BCE	Caesar's expeditions to the Isles
47–84 CE	Roman conquest of southern and northern England, Wales, Scotland
61	Queen Boudicca's revolt
122	Construction begins on Hadrian's Wall
142	Construction begins on Antonine Wall
180	First invasions of northern tribes
185	Roman troops in Britain mutiny; suppressed by new governor
214	Division of area into Britannia Superior and Britannia Inferior
287–293	Conquest and rule by Roman officer Carausius
293	Carausius is assassinated
296	Constantius I becomes caesar of Britannia
307	Constantine the Great becomes emperor; villa culture flourishes in Britannia
313	Toleration of Christianity as one among many sects

337 Death of Constantine

367–368 Wave of raids by Picts and Saxons; Romans retreat southward

380s Chronic attacks weaken Roman rule

410 End of Roman Rule in Britain; waves of invasions by Angles, Saxons, and Jutes

450–495 Saxons settle in Kent, Sussex, and Wessex

500 Organization of seven kingdoms of East Anglia, Mercia, Northumbria, Wessex, Essex, Kent, and Sussex into the heptarchy

597 Arrival of St. Augustine; spread of Christianity begins

664 Synod of Whitby

716 Kingdom of Mercia emerges as leader of heptarchy

731 Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* is completed

790s Danish raids begin

830 Kingdom of Wessex replaces Mercia as most powerful in heptarchy

878 King Alfred defeats the Danes; Dane-law established

910–920 Much of Dane-law is reconquered

927 Kingdom of Britain is formally organized under Aethelstan of Wessex

1002–1013 Renewed hostilities in Dane-law

1016 Danish Cnut the Great becomes king of all England

1043 Edward the Confessor becomes king

1055 Schism in Christian church

1066 William of Normandy invades

1086 Domesday survey

1139–1153 Civil war

1169–1172 English begin invasion and conquest of Ireland

1170 Murder of Thomas Becket, archbishop of Canterbury

1173–1174 King William of Scotland invades northern England

1192 Crusades begin

1215 Magna Carta

1237 Treaty of York establishes border between England and Scotland

1276–1277 War with Wales

1282–1283 Edward I conquers Wales

1296 Edward I invades Scotland; first War of Scottish Independence begins

1297 Scots defeat English at Battle of Stirling Bridge

1306 Robert the Bruce rebels

1314 Scots victorious over English at Bannockburn

1321–1322 Civil war in England

1328 Recognition of Scottish independence

1332–1357 Second War of Scottish Independence

1337 Hundred Years' War with France begins

1347 English capture Calais

1348 Bubonic plague reaches England

1381 Peasants' Revolt

1400 Welsh Revolt (1400–1415) begins with Glyndŵr Rising

1415 Owain Glyndŵr is pardoned

1415 Victory over French at Agincourt

1453 French defeat English at Battle of Castillon, ending Hundred Years' War

1455–1485 Wars of the Roses

1485 Henry VII defeats Richard III in the Battle of Bosworth Field; Tudor dynasty begins

1509 Henry VIII ascends

1513 Scotland invades England as part of War of the League of Cambrai; defeated at Battle of Flodden

1521 Lutheran writings spread to England

1522–1526 War with France

1527 Henry seeks divorce from Catherine of Aragon

1533 Henry marries Anne Boleyn; Princess Elizabeth is born

1534 Act of Supremacy

1535 Thomas More is executed

1536 Monasteries dissolved, sparking Pilgrimage of Grace

1536 England and Wales formally are unified

1542–1546 War with France

1547 Edward VI ascends

1553 Lady Jane Grey, Edward's cousin, ascends at his death; queen for nine days

1553 Mary I ascends

1554 Mary begins reunion with Roman church

1558 Elizabeth I ascends

1559 Religious settlement reinforces independence of English church

1559 John Knox returns to Scotland to spread Calvinism

1560 Scottish parliament abolishes jurisdiction of pope in Scotland

1567 Mary, queen of Scots, is forced to abdicate in favor of five-day-old James VI

1570 Pope excommunicates Elizabeth, calls for her death

1580 Jesuits arrive in England

1582 University of Edinburgh is established

1585–1604 War with Spain

1585 English settlement in Roanoke, Virginia

1587 Mary Stuart is executed

1588 Defeat of Spanish Armada

1592 Scotland formally establishes Presbyterian state church

1600 East India Company is founded

1601 Essex's rebellion

1603 James VI of Scotland becomes James I of England

1605 Gunpowder Plot fails to blow up Houses of Parliament

1607 Settlers to Jamestown, Virginia

1609 Plantation of Ulster begins (Scots and English Protestants)

1618 James VI mandates adoption of episcopal state church in Scotland

1620 Pilgrims travel to “new world”

1624–1630 War with Spain

1625 Charles I ascends

1626–1629 War with France

1628 Massachusetts Bay Colony is established

1628 Petition of Right articulates Parliament's view of crown/parliament partnership

1629 Personal Rule of Charles I begins

1633 William Laud becomes archbishop of Canterbury

1637–1640 Crises in Scotland over religious observance lead to First and Second Bishops' Wars, beginning the period of the Wars of the Three Kingdoms

1641 Grand Remonstrance of Parliament to king

1641 Irish Rebellion in Ulster

1642 Irish Catholic Confederation assumes power

1642 First Civil War begins

1646 Charles I surrenders to Scots

1646 Presbyterian Church is established in Scotland

1648 Charles escapes confinement and Second Civil War begins

1649–1660 Commonwealth of England and Wales is established

1649 Charles I is tried and executed

1649 Charles II is recognized as king by Scottish parliament; flees to France

1649 Drogheda Massacre initiates Cromwell's reconquest of Ireland

1650 Oliver Cromwell's armies to Scotland

1651 Reconquest of Ireland complete

1652–1654 War with Dutch

1652 Conquest of Scotland

1653 Cromwell becomes Lord Protector

1655–1660 War with Spain

1658 Cromwell dies; Richard Cromwell succeeds

1660 Charles II is restored

1662 Church of England is restored

1662 Church of Scotland is restored

1665–1667 Second Dutch War

1665 Great Plague

1666 Great Fire of London

1672–1674 Third Dutch War

1685 James II ascends

1687 Isaac Newton, *Principia Mathematica*

1688 James abdicates; William III and Mary II

1689–1692 Jacobite uprising; suppressed

1689 Bill of Rights; Toleration Act

1692–1693 Salem Witch Trials in colonial Massachusetts

1694 Bank of England is established

1694 Mary II dies; William III reigns as sole ruler

1695 Bank of Scotland is established

1701 Act of Settlement limits Crown to Protestants

1701 War of Spanish Succession begins

1702 Anne I ascends

1707 Union of England and Scotland establishes the United Kingdom

1713 End to War of Spanish Succession

1714 George I ascends

1715 “The 15” (failed Jacobite rebellion)

1720 South Sea Bubble: failed stock scheme nearly bankrupts kingdom

1721 Walpole’s ministry begins

1727 George II ascends

1738 John Wesley is “strangely warmed” by religious experience

1739 War of Jenkins’ Ear (vs Spain)

1740–1748 War of Austrian Succession

1745 “The 45” (failed Jacobite rebellion)

1746 Battle of Culloden Moor ends Jacobite threat

1749 Founding of Bow Street Runners, first police force in London

1752 Britain adopts Gregorian calendar

1755 Samuel Johnson publishes *Dictionary of the English Language*

1756–1763 Seven Years’ War against France, Austria, and Russia

1759 English capture Quebec

1760 George III ascends

1765 Stamp Tax in American Colonies

1765 William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (vol. 1)

1769 James Watt patents steam engine

1773 Boston Tea Party

1776 Declaration of American Independence

1776 Adam Smith, *Wealth of Nations*

1783 Peace of Paris recognizes independent United States

1784 East India Act brings formerly independent company under government oversight

1790 Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*

1791 Thomas Paine, *The Rights of Man*

1792 Mary Wollstonecraft, *Vindication of the Rights of Women*

1793–1802 War with France

1795 Outdoor poor relief (“Speenhamland system”) begins

1796 Smallpox vaccinations begin

1798 Income tax is introduced

1798 Thomas Malthus, *Essay on Population*

1801 Union with Ireland

1803–1815 War with France

1805 Battle of Trafalgar; Admiral Nelson dies in victory, becomes national hero

1807 North Atlantic slave trade is outlawed

1811 Luddite uprisings and machine-breaking in factories

1815 Napoleon is defeated at Waterloo; Congress of Vienna

1816 The “Year without a Summer” leads to famine

1819 Peterloo massacre: government troops charge into peaceful open-air meeting of 60,000 demanding political reforms; 15 killed

1820 George IV ascends

1825 Trade unions are legalized

1825 Stockton and Darlington Railway opens first passenger railway line

1828 London Zoo opens

1829 Catholic emancipation is established

1829 Metropolitan Police Service founded in London

1830–1832 Cholera epidemic

1830 William IV ascends

1832 First Reform Act expands male franchise to middle classes

1833 Factory Act regulates child labor

1833 Slavery Act outlaws slavery in the British Empire

1833 Oxford Movement in Anglican Church

1834 New Poor Law imposes harsh regulations to control costs of poor relief

1834 Grand National Consolidated Trades Union (GNCTU): first attempt to establish a national union; fails

1836 First major decrease in stamp taxes; cheap newspaper press emerges

1837 Victoria ascends

1839–1842 First Opium War

1839–1842 First Anglo-Afghan War

1839–1843 Rebecca Riots in rural Wales

1840s Railway boom: 5,000 miles of track by 1845

1840 Penny post is introduced

1842 First income tax during peace time is introduced

1845–1848 Great Famine in Ireland; 1 million die and 1 million emigrate

1846 Abolition of Corn Laws

1848–1850 Cholera epidemic in England and Wales

1848 Failure of People's Charter

1851 Great Exhibition opens in Crystal Palace

1851 Owens College, Manchester, is founded

1853–1854 Cholera epidemic in London; epidemiologist John Snow removes pump handle in Soho and introduces new ways of analyzing and treating contagious diseases

1854–1856 Crimean War

1856–1860 Second Opium War

1857 Indian Mutiny/Sepoy Rebellion

1858–1859 Fenianism emerges in Ireland

1858 Great Stink of London shows need for metropolitan sewer system

1858 India Act liquidates East India Company and makes India a Crown colony

1859 Charles Darwin, *Origin of Species*

1861 Albert, prince consort, dies

1863 First underground subway line opens in London

1866 Cholera epidemic in London

1867 Second Reform Act extends franchise to all urban male householders, enfranchising a portion of the working classes, and redistributes seats

1867 British North America Act establishes Canada as a dominion

1868–1874 William Gladstone's first government

1868 Last public execution in the United Kingdom

1868 Benjamin Disraeli's first government

1868 First prisoners are transported to Western Australia

1869 Suez Canal is opened

1869 Irish church is disestablished

1869 Girton College is founded as first college for women at Cambridge

1870 Opening of Victorian Embankment marks completion of London sewer/water system

1870 Landlord and Tenant (Ireland) Act seeks to extend some protections to Irish tenant farmers

1870 Education Act (England and Wales): establishes state-sponsored primary education

1870 Married Women's Property Act: women gain control of money they earn and inherit

1870 British civil service adopts entrance exam

1870 First unofficial international soccer match, England versus Scotland

1871 Opening of Royal Albert Hall

1872 Education Act (Scotland): primary education is universal and mandatory

1872 Secret ballot is introduced

1874–1880 Disraeli's second government

1875 Disraeli buys majority stock in Suez Canal

1876 Victoria becomes empress of India

1878–1880 Second Anglo-Afghan War

1878 Lady Margaret Hall established as first women's college at Oxford

1879 Anglo-Zulu War

1879 Tay Bridge Disaster, Dundee; train collapses crossing bridge, all aboard die

1879 Launch of world's first transatlantic steamer from Glasgow to South America

1880–1881 First Anglo-Boer War

1880–1885 Gladstone's second government

1880 Greenwich Mean Time is adopted

1881 Purchase of Land (Ireland) Act: establishes low-cost loans for Irish tenant farmers to purchase their land

1881 Sunday Closing (Wales) Act

1882 Britain occupies Egypt

1882 Failed attempt to assassinate Queen Victoria

1882 Phoenix Park murders by Irish radicals

1883 Trial of Lunatics Act permits "criminal but insane" verdict

1884 Third Reform Act extends franchise to 60 percent of adult men

1886 Gladstone's third government; first Irish Home Rule Bill (fails)

1887 British East Africa Company chartered after the 1885 Congress of Berlin initiates the "scramble for Africa"

1888 Founding of Scottish Labour Party

1888 Whitechapel murders by Jack the Ripper

1888 London matchgirls strike and unionize

1890–1891 Parnell scandal splits Irish National Party

1890 Barings Bank crisis sets off financial panic

1891 Opening of London–Paris telephone system

1891 First Sherlock Holmes story is published in *The Strand*

1892–1894 Gladstone's fourth government

1893 Gaelic League is founded to revive the use of Gaelic language

1893 Second Irish Home Rule Bill (fails)

1893 Independent Labour Party (ILP) is founded; absorbs Scottish Labour Party

1895 Oscar Wilde is convicted of "gross indecency"

1896 Launch of *Daily Mail* initiates cheap press for mass readership

1897 Tate Gallery opens

1898–1902 Second Anglo-Boer War

1898 Hong Kong is leased by Britain for 99 years

1901 Edward VII ascends

1901 Creation of Commonwealth of Australia

1901 Taff-Vale decision severely limits use of union dues in political action

1903 Wyndham Land Purchase Act (Ireland): opens up more land purchases by tenant farmers; approximately 9 million acres purchased during 1903–1914

1904–1905 Christian revival in Wales

1905 Sinn Féin is founded with goal of Irish independence from the United Kingdom

1905 Emmeline Pankhurst leads first march of suffragettes (radical suffragists)

1906 Formation of Labour Party

1908 Old Age Pensions Act

1908 Boy Scouts is founded

1909 Union of South Africa unifies separate colonies into Dominion of South Africa

1909 Louis Blériot is first pilot to fly across the English Channel, winning £1,000 from *Daily Mail*

1910 George V ascends

1910 First double-decker passenger bus in London

1911–1912 Strikes by railway, mining, coal workers

1911 National Insurance Act provides health insurance for industrial workers; beginning of modern welfare state

1912–1914 Third Irish Home Rule Bill (passed but suspended); Welsh Church Disestablishment Act (passed but suspended)

1912 Robert Falcon Scott reaches the South Pole behind Norwegian Roald Amundsen

1912 HMS *Titanic* sinks

1913 Ulster Volunteer Force paramilitary is founded

1914–1918 World War I

1916 Easter Rising/Easter Rebellion: uprising in Dublin marking start of fight for Irish independence

1916 Daylight savings time is introduced

1916 First tank is used in battle

1918–1920 Spanish influenza

1918 Representation of the People Act extends suffrage to women over 30 years and to all men

1919 Third Anglo-Afghan War

1919 Dáil Éireann is established; Irish Volunteer Army becomes Irish Republican Army (IRA)

1919 Nancy Astor becomes first woman to take her seat in the House of Commons

1920 Government of Ireland Act creates Irish Free State and Northern Ireland

1920 Welsh state church is disestablished

1921 Anglo-Irish Treaty (effective January 1922) ends War of Irish Independence, ratifies Irish Free State/Northern Ireland division

1921 Threatened strike of “triple alliance” (miners, dockworkers, railwaymen) averted

1921 Dr. Marie Stopes opens first UK birth control clinic in London

1922–1923 Civil war in Irish Free State

1922 Egypt is granted nominal independence

1922 Archaeologists discover tomb of King Tutankhamen

1922 British Broadcasting Company begins radio broadcasts

1924 First Labour government under Ramsay MacDonald

1926 General strike, May 3–12

1927 United Kingdom officially becomes United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

1928 Alexander Fleming discovers penicillin

1929 Second Labour government

1932 Ottawa Conference establishes protective tariffs for empire

1932 Northern Ireland parliament building is opened at Stormont

1935 Government of India Act establishes federation system of government under the Crown

1936 Edward VIII ascends and abdicates; George VI ascends

1936 Crystal Palace is destroyed by fire

1936 Red public telephone box is introduced

1938 Gas masks are issued to civilians over fears of German war

1938 Munich accords: in the name of appeasement, Neville Chamberlain supervises Hitler's annexation of Sudetenland area of Czechoslovakia

1938 First *kindertransport* of German Jewish children arrives in London from Berlin

1939–1945 World War II

1940–1941 Battle of Britain: air bombing of London and other cities, targeting civilians

1940 Winston Churchill becomes prime minister

1940 Food rationing is introduced

1942 Beveridge Report analyzes economy and provides blueprint for postwar welfare state

1944 D-Day

1947 Princess Elizabeth marries Philip Mountbatten, Duke of Edinburgh

1947 India, Pakistan, Burma independent

1947 End to British mandate in Palestine

1947 Labour begins program of nationalizing industries

1948 National Health Service is established

1948 Summer Olympics is held in London

1949 NATO is founded

1949 Pound is devalued

1949 George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*

1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act

1951 Festival of Britain is founded

1951 First Miss World Competition is held as part of Festival of Britain

1951 Guy Burgess and Donald Maclean defect to USSR

1952 Elizabeth II ascends

1952 The United Kingdom explodes its first atomic bomb off the Australian coast

1952 Great Smog in London

1953 North Sea Flood

1953 Francis Crick and James D. Watson publish description of DNA helix

1954 Withdrawal from Egypt is initiated

1954 J.R.R. Tolkein, *Lord of the Rings Trilogy*

1955 Winston Churchill resigns as prime minister

1955 Cardiff is formally recognized as capital of Wales

1956 Suez Crisis

1957 Anthony Eden resigns as prime minister

1957 The United Kingdom tests its first hydrogen bomb

1958 First protest march against nuclear weapons

1958 Life Peerages Act creates first women peers to sit in the House of Lords

1958 *My Fair Lady* opens at Drury Lane Theatre

1958 Notting Hill race riots

1960 Prime Minister Harold Macmillan delivers "Winds of Change" speech

1960 Debut performance of Beatles in Hamburg, Germany

1960 Launch of first nuclear submarine

1960 Debut of soap opera *Coronation Street*

1961 National Health Service begins distributing oral contraceptives

1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act limits immigration to those with guaranteed work, formally ending practice of open immigration from former colonies

1963 First bid to join European Economic Community (EEC) denied by France

1963 Profumo Affair: secretary of state's mistress leaking secrets to USSR

1963 Debut of *Dr. Who* on BBC

1963 Kim Philby defects to USSR

1963 Great Train Robbery: £2.6 million robbed from Royal Mail Train

1966 Rhodesia is declared independent

1967 BBC begins live broadcasts of Wimbledon

1967 Pound is devalued

1967 Welsh Language Act establishes Welsh as a language that may be used in law courts

1967 Second bid to join EEC is denied by France

1968 Second Commonwealth Immigrants Act further stringently limits immigration from former colonies

1968 Enoch Powell delivers "Rivers of Blood" speech

1968 Race Relations Act makes it illegal to deny housing and other services based on race or ethnicity

1969 Rupert Murdoch purchases *News of the World*

1969 First woman is ordained by Church of Scotland

1969 *Monty Python's Flying Circus* debuts on BBC

1971 Currency in the United Kingdom and Ireland is decimalized

1971 Inflation rate reaches 8.6 percent

1972 National miners' strike

1972 Stormont government ("The Castle," Belfast) replaced by direct rule over Northern Ireland from Westminster

1973 Britain enters EEC

1973 British Library opens

1973 OPEC oil embargo against Europe, the United States, and Japan lasts for five months

1974 National miners' strike

1974 IRA bombs Houses of Parliament and other public buildings

1974 State of emergency is declared in Northern Ireland

1975 Margaret Thatcher is elected first woman leader of Conservative Party

1975 Inflation rate reaches 24.2 percent

1975 First murder by Yorkshire Ripper

1978 Birth of Louise Brown, first “test tube” baby, born after conception via in vitro fertilization

1979 Zimbabwe is granted independence as Rhodesia

1979 “Winter of discontent”: widespread strikes by public sector unions

1979 Votes for devolution fail in Scotland and Wales

1979 First direct elections for European Parliament

1979 IRA assassinates Queen’s uncle, Lord Mountbatten

1979 Margaret Thatcher leads new Conservative government

1981 Arrest and conviction of Yorkshire Ripper Peter Sutcliff after 13 murders

1981 Rupert Murdoch purchases *The Times* and *The Sunday Times*

1981 Prince Charles marries Lady Diana Spencer

1981 Inflation rate falls to 11.9 percent

1982 Falklands War

1982 Launch of Welsh-language television station

1984–1985 Miners’ strike

1985 English football clubs banned from international play

1985 Hillsborough Agreement between Britain and Irish Free State

1986 Inflation rate falls to 3.4 percent

1987 Black Monday crash of stock markets

1988 Pan Am flight 103 explodes over Lockerbie, Scotland

1988 Salman Rushdie, *The Satanic Verses*

1989 Poll tax (Scotland)

1990 Poll tax (England and Wales)

1990 Britain joins Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM)

1990 Margaret Thatcher resigns as prime minister

1991 Gulf War begins

1991 Tim Berners-Lee introduces World Wide Web

1992 Britain leaves ERM

1992 Maastricht Treaty establishes the EU

1992 *Punch* (founded 1841) ceases publication

1992 Windsor Castle fire

1994 IRA cease-fire in Northern Ireland

1994 Anglican Church ordains first women priests

1994 Israeli embassy in London is bombed

1994 Channel Tunnel opens

1995 Barings Bank collapses

1996 Docklands bombing by IRA ends cease-fire

1996 Prince Charles and Princess Diana divorce

1996 Dolly, the cloned sheep, is born at the Roslin Institute in Scotland

1996 Stone of Scone, the “coronation stone,” returned to Scotland after 700 years

1997 Labour under Tony Blair wins sweeping victory

1997 J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*

1997 Death of Princess Diana in car accident

1997 Voters approve devolution in Scotland and Wales

1997 Hong Kong is transferred to People's Republic of China

1997 BBC launches online news service

1998 Good Friday agreement in Northern Ireland establishes relations between Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland; beginning of end to “The Troubles”

1999 Britain refuses to join new Economic and Monetary Union

1999 Euro is introduced

1999 Minimum wage introduced in the United Kingdom

1999 First elections to Scottish parliament and National Assembly for Wales

1999 Abolition of most hereditary peers in the House of Lords

1999 Millennium Dome and London Eye open on December 31

2000 Tate Modern Gallery opens

2001 9/11 bombings in New York City claim lives of 67 UK nationals

2003 Iraq War

2004 Hunting Act bans use of dogs in foxhunting

2004 140 Britons among 270,000 victims of Boxing Day tsunami in Indian Ocean

2004 Prince Charles marries Camilla Parker Bowles

2004 Civil Partnership Act recognizes same-sex unions

2005 Prevention of Terrorism Act

2005 Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act

2005 "7/7" bombings in London

2006 Smoking is banned in all public places in Scotland

2007 Tony Blair resigns as prime minister

2007 Smoking is banned in all public places in England and Wales

2008 Climate Change Act pledges action toward low-carbon economy

2009 Swine flu epidemic

2009 Supreme Court of the United Kingdom convenes first session

2009 Chilcott Inquiry begins into Blair's handling of Iraq War

2010 Devolved government in Northern Ireland

2010 General election results in coalition government

2011 Prince William marries Catherine Middleton

2011 Rupert Murdoch's *News of the World* forced to cease publication as a result of a phone-hacking scandal

2012 London hosts Olympic Games

2012 Julian Assange gains political asylum at Ecuadorian Embassy in London

2013 Library of Birmingham opens as the largest public library in the United Kingdom

2013 Same-sex marriage is legalized in England and Wales

2014 Same-sex marriage is legalized in Scotland

2014 Anglican Church approves ordination of women bishops

2014 First case of Ebola is diagnosed in the United Kingdom

2014 Scotland rejects independence in referendum

2014 Nicola Sturgeon becomes first female first minister of Scotland

2015 Inflation rate falls to 0 percent

2015 Conservatives win in general election

2015 European migrant crisis begins

2015 Elizabeth II becomes longest-reigning monarch

2015 Air strikes against Islamic State in Syria begin

2015 Last deep-pit coal mine in the United Kingdom closes

2016 European Union referendum (“Brexit”) results in vote to leave EU

2016 Sadiq Khan becomes London’s first Muslim mayor

2016 Chilcot Report is released on Iraq War

2016 Theresa May becomes prime minister

2017 Article 50 of Treaty of Lisbon is formally invoked, beginning Brexit process

2017 Terrorist attack in Manchester Arena kills 22 and wounds more than 100, mostly children and teens at a concert by Ariana Grande

2017 Terrorist attack on London Bridge kills 7 and injures 48

2017 Grenfell Tower fire in London kills 72

2017 Conservatives win in “snap” general election

2017 Duke of Edinburgh retires from public duties at age 96

2018 Death of physicist Stephen Hawking

2018 British political consulting firm Cambridge Analytica files for bankruptcy amid scandal connected to voter fraud in the United Kingdom and the United States

2018 Prince Harry marries American actress Meghan Markle

GREAT BRITAIN



1

Great Britain Today

Britain has always meant more than "England," although for many English and for many outside England this meaning has been allowed for centuries to assume a role of singular importance. At one time or another in history, Britain has incorporated England, Wales, Scotland, Ireland, the smaller islands surrounding these larger isles, parts of what is now France, great chunks of North and South America, large portions of both Africa and Asia, and the whole of Australasia. Britain has also, by choice or by compulsion, divested itself of many of these holdings but has left indelible traces of British culture behind.

Perhaps the best place to start is with a quick geographical primer. England (capital London), Scotland (capital Edinburgh), and Wales (capital Cardiff) are all part of the contemporary entity known as Great Britain. All three of these, along with Northern Ireland, are part of the "United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland" or United Kingdom. Very often, the United Kingdom is also referred to as simply "Britain," and today "British" is often held to describe and refer to the entire United Kingdom. The entirety of Ireland was part of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland from the 1801 Act of Union through 1921, when it was divided by the Anglo-Irish Treaty.

into the Irish Free State and Northern Ireland. The Irish Free State changed its name to Éire in 1937 before becoming the Republic of Ireland in 1948. It includes the 26 southern counties of the former larger Ireland, and its capital is Dublin. Northern Ireland, which remains part of the United Kingdom, is made up of the six northeastern counties, including Ulster, and its capital is Belfast.

Within the geographical perimeter of the British Isles, the Channel Islands (Jersey, Guernsey, Alderney, Sark, and several smaller islands), and the Isle of Man are crown dependencies, self-governing possessions of the Crown, which are overseen by lieutenant governors but with relative autonomy. They are not included in the formal United Kingdom, nor are they members of the Commonwealth of Nations or the European Union. The Shetland and Orkney Isles, by contrast, are counties of Scotland, and Anglesey is a county of Wales.

But Britain is not and has never been limited to these areas. The British Empire at its peak spanned the globe, and in the years after World War I, as it began to be dismantled, commonwealth status replaced colonial status for much of the empire. The British Commonwealth of Nations was formally established in 1931 to include the white-settled dominions that had been self-governing for decades: Canada, Newfoundland, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and the Irish Free State. As decolonization progressed in the years after World War II, commonwealth status was granted to those new nations that chose to belong. Today, the Commonwealth embraces 52 nations, most of which are former British colonies or have some strong relationship with a former colony (e.g., Samoa and New Zealand). These members recognize the British monarch as the symbolic head of the organization but share little else except a common history of British rule. Membership is voluntary, but applications for membership must be approved by the Commonwealth Heads of Government.

The British Isles themselves are, especially to Americans, quite small. Their entire area—93,000 square miles for the United Kingdom and 27,135 square miles for the Republic of Ireland—is only slightly larger than New England. Yet within this small area, there is great geographic diversity, from the moors of Devon and the fens, or swamps, of the southeast to the highlands and lowlands of Scotland. The climate is tempered by the effects of Atlantic currents, so that while the varieties of weather include snow and heat, extremes of temperature or precipitation are rare. Certain areas, such as Scotland and Wales, receive some 200 days of rain a year, although most of England and Ireland is less perpetually soggy.

ETHNICITY AND CULTURE, CLASS, AND RELIGION

The 2017 announcement of the engagement of Prince Harry, at the time fifth in line to the throne, to actress Meghan Markle—American, divorced, biracial—opened a new chapter of gossipy interest in “the royals” as it also challenged the cultural attitudes of many in the United Kingdom. Much of the negative press surrounding the engagement reflected deep racial and social antagonisms that have surfaced as the country has aged and become increasingly diverse.

Census figures for 2011 placed the overall UK population at 63.2 million (an increase of some 7% since 2001), with 53 million people in England, 5.3 million in Scotland, 3.1 million in Wales, and 1.8 million in Northern Ireland. The robust growth in population comes not only from longer life expectancies (especially for aging baby boomers) and higher birth rates but also from net migration (the numbers of immigrants minus the numbers of emigrants), which has risen steadily since 2012. This growth rate is about twice the growth rate for the European Union as a whole (0.53% vs. 0.25%).¹ Brexit will undoubtedly modify this growth trend, as most of the increase in immigration has come from working-age men and women from EU countries.

This growing population is aging. Of the 63 million inhabitants of the United Kingdom noted in 2011, 18 percent are below 16 years of age, 66 percent are between 16 and 64 years, and 16 percent are above 65 years.² (In 2001, these figures were 20%, 59%, and 21%, respectively.) The population is also changing in terms of ethnicity and culture. While the population of Northern Ireland is mostly white, the numbers of those in the rest of the United Kingdom who claim mixed and nonwhite ethnicity have grown considerably since 1980. Census figures from 2011 indicate that 86 percent claim white ethnicity, a decrease from 94 percent in 2001. Of the 13 percent born outside the United Kingdom, one-third emigrated from Europe (primarily from EU member countries), another third from the Middle East or Asia (primarily Iraq or Iran), and one-fifth from Africa (primarily Egypt or South Africa). Religious affiliations among those arriving since 2001 indicate that the largest numbers of immigrants identify as Buddhist, Christian, Muslim, or “no religion.” These rapid changes in ethnicity and cultural background have affected especially cities and towns, and it is not surprising that the strongest push for Brexit has come from areas outside London, as suburban and rural voters with little daily exposure to immigrants were the prime demographic in favor of leaving the EU. (Voters in London and in Scotland, Wales, and Northern

Ireland voted overwhelmingly to remain, for reasons we will explore at the end of this volume.)

The rapid influx of immigrants over the past 20 years has inevitably placed great burdens on infrastructure even while these men and women have helped strengthen the overall economy. They also, inevitably, have helped reshape a British culture that has always included elements of empire, from the late 19th-century craze for all things Egyptian to the 20th-century Jamaican influence on popular music. Anti-immigrant sentiment has been an unfortunate part of British culture for the past two centuries, focusing on obvious differences in religion, race, and cultural habits and worsening at times of economic stagnation—ranging from the Irish potato famine of the 1840s to the period beginning with the Cold War. As we will see in Chapter 12, the influence of modern anti-immigrant propaganda ties into what some observers have called the “order/openness” divide among voters, resulting in a tendency to conflate particular forms of white nationalism with perceptions of safety, on the one hand, and cultural heterogeneity with perceptions of chaos and danger, on the other.

These ethnic differences—significant enough to attract the attention of social critics, artists, and politicians beginning in the mid-19th century—have tended to complicate rather than to erase Britain’s traditionally very strong class divisions. In areas where there are fewer issues of race, class alone remains as divisive as it was at the height of the 19th century. Former deputy prime minister John L. Prescott, who was born into a Welsh working-class family, is said to have proclaimed in 1997 that “we’re all middle class now,”³ but this middle class continues to be subdivided in ways that reflect not only income but also consumer preferences, education, vocabulary, and technological savvy. Markers of class still include accent, although this has been complicated by the deliberate adoption of down-scale pronunciation by those rejecting “received pronunciation” or “BBC English,” beginning in the 1970s. They also include leisure preferences, although this too has been complicated with the enthusiastic embrace of soap operas rooted not just in the working classes (e.g., the long-running *Coronation Street* and *EastEnders*) but also in the stratified middle classes portrayed in *Made in Chelsea* and *The Only Way Is Essex*. Even a preference for football (U.S. soccer), traditionally the most quintessential of working-class leisure pursuits, has crossed class lines, largely because tickets to live events have become prohibitively expensive.

While divisions between and among middle and working classes have been increasingly inflected by ethnicity and race, the upper class

has remained relatively homogeneous. The continued existence of a hereditary aristocracy is a source of endless fascination for Americans and often for the British as well. It is outlined in all of its complexity in both the annual *Debrett's Peerage* and the less-frequent *Burke's Peerage*. The highest rank within the peerage is duke or duchess, a title limited to the royal family. Dukes are territorial titles; that is, one is a Duke of Northumberland because the family territory is in Northumberland. Other titles often incorporate the family name rather than the territory. The highest rank held by an individual outside the royal family is marquess (sometimes "marquis") or marchioness. This is followed in descending order by earl/countess, viscount/viscountess, and baron/baroness. At the bottom of the ladder of hereditary titles is that of baronet, which is, essentially, an inherited form of knighthood reserved to men (only four women have carried the title of baronetess in British history). Knighthood itself is an honor conferred by the Crown on men and women to recognize service in various ways, ranging from traditional military service to popularity in the theater or sport, and is for life only. Neither baronets nor knights are peers; that is, they remain commoners and may not be included in the House of Lords. Baronetcies pass to male heirs, but knighthood is not inheritable.

In addition to the hereditary peers are the life peers, recognized as such for achievement or service to the country, who usually hold the title of baron or baroness. The late prime minister Margaret Thatcher, for example, was given the rank of baroness on retirement, enabling her to sit in the House of Lords, and was called "Lady Margaret Thatcher" until her death. The actor Lawrence Olivier was similarly honored in 1970 as "Baron Olivier." Life peers hold titles that cannot be inherited, although their children may adopt "The Honourable" as part of their own styling.

Children of hereditary peers may accumulate a number of titles on their own but will always be referred to by their highest honor, which will change when they inherit new titles on the death of a parent. Thus, if the Duke of Bedford dies, his son, the Marquess of Tavistock, automatically becomes the new Duke of Bedford and is subsequently referred to as such. The same holds true when any individual is granted a new title; for example, when Benjamin Disraeli, the (untitled) 19th-century prime minister, was made the Earl of Beaconsfield (a title that died with him) by Queen Victoria, he was "Disraeli" until 1876 and "Beaconsfield" thereafter. Similarly, the 18th-century man of letters Horace Walpole became the Earl of Orford (a hereditary title) in 1742 and was known subsequently as "Orford" in official records and correspondence.

Since the 1950s, many politically minded children of hereditary peers have renounced their titles, primarily because the inheritance of a peerage means immediate translation from the House of Commons, where political power is considerable, to the House of Lords, where it is not. Thus, for instance, the Labour politician Anthony Wedgwood Benn fought for the right to renounce the title of Viscount Stansgate and was known simply as “Tony Benn” until his death in 2014. Benn’s actions in 1960 led to the 1963 Peerage Act that provided for the renunciation of “unwanted” titles by members of the House of Lords.

The Church of England is as complicated as the peerage. Also known as the Anglican Church, it is the traditional established, or state, religion of England. The Church has successfully fought several battles against disestablishment, the formal removal from its position as a part of the state. Until 1920, the Anglican Church was also the established, or state, church of Wales, but it was disestablished as the state church of Wales that year; as the Church of Wales, it remains part of the Anglican Communion. In Scotland, the state church is the Kirk, which is Presbyterian. In Northern Ireland, there is no state church, but most of the 66 percent Protestant majority are either Presbyterian or Church of Ireland (Anglican).

Within the Anglican Church in England, the highest authority resides in the Archbishop of Canterbury, whose province now has 30 dioceses; his counterpart, the Archbishop of York, presides over 12. Each diocese is in turn presided over by a bishop within a cathedral. The first female Church of England Bishop was consecrated in January 2015. Below the bishop in each diocese are the archdeacon and the dean. Administratively, the Church of England is divided into parishes, each with its own church. Until the New Poor Law of 1834, one of the most important functions of each parish, in addition to religious care, was the care of the poor within its geographical boundaries. The priest of the church is referred to as the rector or the vicar.

Despite the persistence of an established state church (Anglican or Presbyterian), the United Kingdom shares with other Western countries a gradual but significant decline in Christian religious practice. The 2011 census returns indicated that nearly 60 percent of respondents in England and Wales considered themselves Christian, down from nearly 72 percent in 2001; the next largest affiliation was Muslim (4.8%, up from 3.0% in 2001). About 25 percent indicated “no religion,” up from 14.8 percent in 2001. In 2011, slightly more than 2 percent indicated Hindu, Buddhist, Judaism, or Sikh; approximately 0.5 percent indicated “other,” which included both established groups such as Jain and less traditional groups such as Jedi or “heavy metal.”⁴ In Scotland,

the 2011 census indicated that 54 percent of the population claimed affiliation with some form of Christianity (down from 65% in 2001), while 37 percent indicated “no religion” (up from 9% in 2001);⁵ 1.4 percent identified as Muslim in 2011, up from 0.09 percent in 2001.⁶ Surveys of actual practice, rather than formal affiliation, indicate that attendance at most established Christian churches has dropped precipitously over the past several decades, with nearly half of members reporting that they do not attend services regularly.⁷ As we will see in later chapters, the changing nature of religious belief in the United Kingdom has had significant impact on local, national, and imperial identities.

GOVERNMENT

Britain is a constitutional monarchy where most power now resides in the House of Commons, the lower house of Parliament. This was not always the case. The shift from “crown” to “crown-in-parliament” took many decades, a regicide, several civil wars, and an abdication. Today the queen, Elizabeth II, is a figurehead. However, for many her symbolic functions are crucial to the “Britishness” of Britain. Ongoing arguments over the wealth and responsibilities of the royal family erupt periodically in calls for the abolition of the Crown. The personal disasters of many of Elizabeth’s children—especially the public life and early death of Diana, the first wife of the current prince of Wales, which provided ample fodder for journalists—have led some to argue that the royal family is more burden than boon. When a fire gutted part of Windsor Castle in 1992, the year Elizabeth herself referred to as an *annus horribilis*, the question of who should pay for the \$62 million in repairs highlighted the larger question of whether the monarchy was anything more than a drain on the economy. Yet in 2002, when Elizabeth celebrated her Golden Jubilee, much of the British public warmly congratulated the queen on the 50 years of her reign. By the time Prince William, second in line to the throne, married Catherine Middleton in 2011, public sentiment was overwhelmingly positive for “Will and Kate.” Even the most cynical observers now doubt that the monarchy will be abolished anytime soon and are resigned to the continuation of a symbolic Crown that still wields important emotional and persuasive powers. Indeed, the popularity of the multi-season dramas *The Crown*, portraying the reign of Elizabeth II, and *Victoria*, testifies to the continued fascination of the royal family past and present, both in the United Kingdom and abroad.

Real political power is vested in the House of Commons, the lower house that along with the House of Lords constitutes the British

Parliament, which sits in the borough of Westminster in London. Most political and government offices are located on Whitehall Street, many of them in Whitehall Palace. As a result, the government itself is often referred to as “Whitehall.” In this text, “Westminster” refers to the Parliament, and “Whitehall” refers to the ministries of the Crown.

A series of reform bills in the 19th and early 20th centuries extended the franchise to the entire adult population. Some 66 percent of voters participated in the 2015 general election.⁸ Parliament is in session annually. The 2011 Fixed Term Parliament Act mandates a general election every five years, on the first Thursday of May. Under certain circumstances—a motion from within the House of Commons with two-thirds support, or a vote of “no confidence” in the existing government—a general election can be called before the five-year period is up. So-called by-elections are held in individual districts if an MP (member of Parliament) dies or retires within that five-year period. A total of 650 MPs represent the United Kingdom: in 2017, there were 442 men and 208 women returned as MPs. Of that total, 19 represent Northern Ireland, 59 represent Scotland, and 40 represent Wales. In addition, there are “devolved” governments for Northern Ireland (the Northern Ireland Executive), Scotland (the Scottish Executive), and Wales (the Welsh Assembly Government). Created in 1998 after local referenda, each of these devolved governments sits regularly to consider subjects not explicitly reserved to the UK Parliament, including health, education, justice, and agriculture. Each has its own first or prime minister and a cabinet of ministers.

Although there are several smaller parties, the parliament in Westminster is essentially a two-party system. Today these parties are the Conservatives, occasionally still referred to as the Tories, and Labour. Since 1945 the control of government has been in the hands of one or the other of those parties without much input from the smaller parties, which include the Liberal Democrats, the Scottish Nationalist Party, Plaid Cymru (the Welsh Independence Party), the UK Independence Party (which spearheaded Brexit), and the Green Party. Coalition government is common on the continent, but it is and has always been singularly absent in England, although it is much more the norm in the devolved governments of Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland.

Parliament itself is made up of the House of Lords and the House of Commons. Hereditary peers sit in the House of Lords, a privilege that was limited to men until 1958, when female life peers gained that right. As noted earlier, female hereditary peers were not permitted to sit in the House of Lords until 1963. The House of Lords retains the

power to debate important issues and to delay certain nontax measures passed by the House of Commons, although any measure passed by the Commons in two successive years becomes law despite any vote by the House of Lords. The head of the House of Lords is the Lord Chancellor. The 1963 Peerage Act, which permitted the renunciation of titles, also enabled female hereditary peers to sit and eliminated the requirement that Scottish peers select only 16 from among their number to represent them all. In 1999, a modified House of Lords Act called for the elimination of all but 92 hereditary peers, as a stepping-stone to a completely elected House of Lords. As of 2018, several proposals for a fully elected House of Lords have been debated, but no further changes have been made.

The powers of the Lords form only a very moderate check on the House of Commons, whose 651 MPs represent Britain's 651 constituencies, including those in Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland. These MPs receive a salary, unlike the peers who sit in the House of Lords. However, real power is wielded not through the elected members of each district but rather through a ministerial system made up of approximately 20 cabinet ministers—with specific duties and responsibilities, such as education and housing—and some 70 non-cabinet ministers, or “ministers without portfolio,” who lack these specific departmental responsibilities and serve primarily as advisors at large. These ministers, both with and without portfolio, are chosen by the prime minister, who is technically only “first among equals” but in reality wields tremendous power.

The prime minister's residence and offices are located off Whitehall Street at 10 Downing Street; 11 Downing Street is the site of other ministerial offices, and references are often made simply to “Downing Street” as the source of ministerial decisions. A whip system maintains party unity. Members who do not vote as directed by the party whip—an individual chosen for his or her powers of persuasion—may lose all influence and support from the party and may not be nominated by the party to run for subsequent election.

One of the oddities of the ministerial system that developed over the course of the 20th century is the so-called Shadow Ministry. The party not in power appoints members to form its own government, and each of these members “shadows” the party in power. Thus, a shadow secretary of education would research and recommend policies regarding education for the minority party. This enables a relatively smooth transition when government power changes party hands, based on a strong working knowledge of the various aspects of administration

and policy. Many party leaders rise through the ranks in this way. Conservative prime minister Margaret Thatcher, for instance, served in several shadow cabinet posts while Labour was in power in the 1970s.

To complicate matters further, all ministers are politicians rather than experts in their field. Every department of government—education, housing, and so on—is staffed by a bureaucracy led by the permanent secretary, an individual trained in the field and with deep working knowledge and experience that may be lacking in the minister.

Despite the location of most real power in the hands of ministers, the House of Commons remains for many the public face of the parliamentary system. Debates are often televised, and the formal divisions and votes are open to the public. Within the chambers of the House of Commons, the Speaker of the House (elected by the MPs as a body) is located at the top of the chamber; the MPs whose party is the majority—“the government”—sit to the right of the Speaker, and the MPs in the minority party sit to the left. Ministers and shadow ministers sit on the front benches on their respective sides, with non-ministers on the back benches where they are known, not surprisingly, as “back-benchers.” Minority MPs are known as Her Majesty’s Loyal Opposition and have the right and duty to harangue the majority MPs in debate and in the twice-weekly question-and-answer periods held in the chambers. The Speaker of the House presides over these debates and Q&A sessions and is responsible for ensuring that both majority and minority opinions are presented.

INDUSTRY AND ECONOMY

While British literature and poetry have always celebrated the idyllic qualities of the countryside, Britain—especially northern England—was the first major area in Europe to industrialize. Today only the south of England is still primarily rural. Scotland, with its often-daunting terrain, still depends on fishing, oil, and sheep farming. Wales and Northern Ireland remain agricultural. All of the areas of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, as well as the Republic of Ireland, enjoy and depend on significant tourist traffic for economic health.

The United Kingdom’s primary industries include petroleum, cars and planes, textiles, food processing, paper products, and chemicals, although as the international economy has turned from manufactured goods to intellectual capital, Britain and Ireland have made a similar shift. Coal mining, long a staple of the British economy owing to significant coal reserves in northern England and in Wales, has declined

in recent years even as North Sea oil reserves have allowed Britain to emerge as a major fuel exporter. Not surprisingly, and reflecting the decline in trade and industry, union membership has fallen, to about 23.3 percent of all employed adults in Great Britain in 2016,⁹ with the lowest levels of membership in the south and southeast and the highest in Wales (36%), Scotland (29%), and Northern Ireland (28%). In summer 2017, overall unemployment rates were 4.3 percent in the United Kingdom¹⁰ and 5.6 percent in the Republic of Ireland.¹¹ The per capita income in the United Kingdom for the same period was U.S. \$41,600.¹² All of these figures indicate rapid growth, often significantly higher than that in the EU.

RELATIONS WITH EUROPE

As the major imperial power in the 19th century, Britain entered the 20th century looking away from the continent and toward the rest of the globe. This perspective was forced to shift with decolonization and world wars, both of which affected British social and economic stability, and again in the 2000s with active membership in the EU. The implementation of Brexit will undoubtedly be equally challenging to accommodate. As we will see in Chapter 12, Britain's relations with Europe, America, and the rest of the world are undergoing a seismic shift, and we will explore them in detail later in the book.

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2

Roman and Anglo-Saxon Britain

PRE-ROMAN AND ROMAN BRITAIN

Little is known about the British Isles before written records, which generally began with the Roman invasion of 55 BCE. However, archaeological expeditions have uncovered some evidence of human settlements dating back to approximately 17000 BCE. More evidence—including the remains of ornamental pottery, flint arrowheads, and agricultural artifacts—exists for settlements beginning about 3000 BCE. These groups are thought to have migrated from Northern Europe to what is today the southeastern part of England adjacent to the English Channel and then to have spread northward into Yorkshire and westward into Ireland. Among the traditions of these early inhabitants was the practice of burying their dead in communal “barrows,” or long mounds, some as long as 350 feet; several of these are still visible today. A later wave of migrants, identified as the Beaker People based on their pottery, joined these earliest barrow peoples before the Bronze Age (about 2000 to 1000 BCE). Several groups of migrants crossed the English Channel during the Bronze Age, the

most important of which has been named the Wessex Culture. By the time of the Iron Age, settled farming sites were scattered throughout the south, with life organized around both animal husbandry and crop farming.

Perhaps the most immediate image of pre-Roman Britain is the famous site of Stonehenge, a great stone circle now believed to have originated as early as 2500 BCE, during the time of the Beaker People. "Henge" means "hanging" or "hinged," and Stonehenge was so named because the giant circle on Salisbury Plain includes massive stones that appear to be hanging in air, balanced on other stones in almost impossible ways. Although neither the details behind its construction nor the reasons for the circle are clear, evidence suggests the stones were quarried in Wales and then floated via riverways to their final destination, for use as an observatory or for religious practices that included sun worship. Other similar monuments were erected throughout the region, with one dubbed Woodhenge just a few miles from Salisbury Plain and others scattered as far away as the Lake District and the islands off Scotland. More than 900 stone circles still exist.



Stonehenge, one of the most famous surviving stone monuments of the pre-Roman era, is believed to be made of huge stones quarried in Wales and then floated via rivers to the Salisbury Plain near modern-day Wiltshire. Many such monuments still exist throughout the British Isles. Although their original purposes remain unknown, scholars believe they may have been used for religious purposes. (Corel)

The wave of pre-Roman migrants known as the Celts came from central Europe via Northern Europe in two waves, from about 2000 BCE through 400 BCE. Early Roman accounts link the Celts in Britain to the Celts in Gaul and describe them as warlike, courageous, and aggressive. The Romans also describe two additional warlike peoples, the Picts in Scotland and the Scots in Ireland, who were believed to be related to the more widely scattered Celts. Fears that Celts in Northern Europe would use the British Isles to launch an attack on Roman outposts prompted Julius Caesar to sail to England in 55 BCE in a short-lived invasion. The Picts in the north would remain resistant to Roman incursions, but by 43 CE Roman rule was imposed in the southeast of England by Emperor Claudius, in a system that organized the new conquest into distinct areas, each under a client king. The center of this Roman occupation was Londinium; 7 of the first 15 roads in Britannia originated in the city, attesting to its early importance. The client king system was rife with corruption from the beginning, although it spawned only one major revolt, Queen Boudicca's ruthlessly suppressed Celtic uprising in 61 CE. Between about 70 and 160 CE, Roman rule was transformed under a series of leaders, who gradually replaced the system of client kings with one of local administrators more closely tied both to the local inhabitants and to Roman bureaucracy.

The earliest Roman governors had focused on a small Britannia that encompassed much of southeast England, with a provincial capital established in Colchester. Archaeological evidence also links Romans to Ireland by about 78 CE and Lowland Scotland by about 81 CE. Within a few decades, Roman rule extended north and west to Hadrian's Wall (begun 122), which stretched roughly from Newcastle to Carlisle. Hadrian's successor, Antoninus Pius, ordered the construction of another wall farther north to extend Roman control and to present a defense against the Caledonian tribes of northern Scotland. Roman rule in the north and far west was, however, always less secure than in the southeast, and most Roman cities and towns were surrounded by defensive walls designed to protect against the incursions of outlying tribes. The cities themselves—from London to the smaller centers of Colchester, Verulamium, Exeter, Chester, and Carmarthen—were characterized by a mix of market, government, and social functions, ranging from council chambers to public baths, all used in various degrees by populations that encompassed gentry and military officers, slaves and skilled laborers, businessmen and veterans. Rapid growth and development led to the division of Britain into two provinces during this period, with Britannia Inferior centered around York

and Britannia Superior—so named because it was closer to Rome—centered around London. Both cities were important centers not only of military defense and government administration but also—especially in the case of London—of international trade. Rapid movement of merchants and soldiers through these cities undoubtedly helped spread the plague between 165 and 180. A constant influx of immigrants contributed to the polyglot nature of Roman Britannia.

This period of peace, marred increasingly by tribal attacks along the northern and western frontiers and punctuated outside the borders of Britannia by chaos and breakdown within the Roman Empire as a whole, lasted until the middle of the third century. In 287 a senior military officer named Carausius seized control as a local emperor in his own right, and by the time the central Roman administration had regained control of Britannia in 293, significant changes had been initiated throughout the entire empire by Emperor Diocletian. Economically, unprecedented levels of taxation were joined by new controls on labor, which included the creation of a peasantry newly tied to the land. Diocletian also sought to replace the untrammelled power of the military with local and state governments more firmly under royal control. Thus, he created new imperial offices, with two senior and two junior emperors, or caesars, serving under him. It was the senior caesar of the west, Constantius I, who presided over the reclamation of the rebel Britannia, leading a series of battles against mercenary troops from the continent and then fighting the Picts in Scotland in order to secure the area. The reclaimed expanse, now the Diocese of the Britains, was overseen by a *vicarius Britanniarum* or vicar of the diocese, the new administrative unit of the Roman Empire.

Constantius's successor, Constantine the Great (ca. 274–337), ushered in a golden age of prosperity and peace, during which Roman Britain enjoyed the growth of local arts and industries. Within the territory bounded by Hadrian's Wall, Britannia was subdivided into four separate provinces, with Lincoln and Cirencester joining the ranks of provincial capitals alongside London and York. By about 300, London had become the official capital of the entire diocese. Villa culture flourished. Elaborate homes that included central heating and baths formed a central focus for a community of smaller homes and agricultural outbuildings, linked as a whole to main roads but providing a locus of aristocratic life separate from the towns and cities that were ruled by royal bureaucracy and imperial army. Within this villa culture, Christianity quietly took root and spread, although when Christianity became the state religion under Constantine certain elements of the villa aristocracy appear to have briefly embraced the old pagan

cults as a way to establish resistance to imperial power. By the middle of the fourth century, however, heresy was a crime against the state and was punished as such. Despite this edict, Christianity appears to have been unevenly rooted in rural Britannia and even less securely established in urban areas.

Constantine's golden age ended with his own life; power passed violently from son to son until an army commander named Magnentius took control. The brutal program of suppression and murder after Constantine's death seriously impaired Britannia's villa aristocracy, and the diocese was further weakened when Picts and Scots launched a series of invasions along the borders, taking advantage of internal weakness to reclaim tribal ascendancy. In 367 a multipronged invasion of the empire took Roman Britain by surprise. United in what would be termed the "Barbarian Conspiracy," Picts, Scots, and other tribes poured over the borders, looting and pillaging. Even famed city walls could not protect urban areas from invasion, and military troops deserted in large numbers until new forces were dispatched under the leadership of Theodosius, whose son would become Emperor Theodosius the Great.

On the death of Emperor Theodosius in 395, the Roman Empire fell into a period of further decay. Britannia was left largely to its own devices, forced to defend itself against invasions by Saxons and others. By 409 it had thrown off nearly all its allegiance to a larger Roman Empire and ejected its Roman administrators. The Roman machinery of central government was largely abandoned as Roman military troops were recalled to Gaul to repel trouble on the continent, and city leaders in Britannia were told to "look to their own defense" by Emperor Honorius. Britannia pulled itself inward, devoting its powers to self-protection, in a long but relatively steady slide away from the complex society of Roman Britain. The pottery industry collapsed by the middle of the 400s; local coinage ceased at about the same time, indicating that Britannia's role in an international trading community had faded. This does not mean that civilization itself ceased. Instead, local power was taken into the hands of local leaders, as regional, provincial, and imperial ties began to fray. By about 450 the entire Roman Empire was imploding, collapsing in on itself. Roman Britain had been outside the orbit of the emperor for decades and was ripe for invasion.

ANGLO-SAXON BRITAIN

In his famous *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, the monk known as the Venerable Bede in 731 sketched the history of the

Germani, the three major groups of Germanic invaders who began to enter the British Isles as Roman rule collapsed. Angles and Saxons and Jutes, all from northern Germany and the southern area of Denmark, came in great numbers.

Many entered Britannia as mercenaries in the last decades of Roman rule, earlier than the date of 449 identified by Bede. Others were “invited” in to help protect settlements from the constant incursions of the Picts and Scots, now referred to generally as “Celts” along with the other non-Roman Britons. By about 600, according to Bede’s chronicle and other records, about half of the British Isles was under the control of the Germani. Celts retained control of the other half: Scotland remained in the hands of the Picts, while Ireland was home to settlements of Scots. Roman Britons had fled much of the southeast to escape the invaders, establishing three kingdoms in the north and a number of kingdoms in Wales. The word “Welshman,” ironically, came to mean “slave” and referred to the Britons who had escaped to the west. Only traces of Roman rule and custom remained in the Anglo-Saxon settlements that covered most of the rest of the former Britannia.

Seventh-century England—the parts of the Isles now under the control of the Angles and Saxons and referred to as the land of the Angles, or England, in Bede’s history—slowly organized itself into seven large kingdoms. Wessex, home of the West Saxons, would eventually emerge as the strongest of the so-called Anglo-Saxon Heptarchy, which included Essex and Sussex (east and south Saxons, respectively), East Anglia, Kent, Mercia (“middle Anglia”), and Northumbria. The Celtic areas formed their own kingdoms to the north and east. Thus, the Isles were a patchwork of kingdoms, each fighting first for its own survival and then for control over its neighbors.

This early period was one of shifting allegiances and power struggles among the kingdoms. Larger kingdoms meant greater wealth; greater wealth attracted greater military forces, which in their turn were used to enlarge boundaries even further. But the system was one that was constantly in flux, with kingdoms rarely enjoying prolonged periods of peace and stability. Kings followed kings in patterns that were not determined solely by kinship but that were instead often dependent on the personal strength, charisma, and manipulative abilities of individual men. A military aristocracy was key to this system of kingship, and personal loyalty often trumped bloodlines. Both Bede’s *History* and the most famous epic of the period, *Beowulf*, illustrate the centrality of warrior culture to the early Anglo-Saxon period. The purportedly more peaceful tenets of Christianity were not yet

strong enough to balance out these essentially pagan notions of power and conquest.

In the countryside, peasants were generally free, rather than tied to the land as would be the case in the later Anglo-Saxon period. They were commonly responsible for a parcel of land called a hide, and with each hide came obligations to the king, usually obligations in kind such as grain or other commodities. Hides were themselves grouped into manors, or blocks of land, that were granted to servants or lords to the king. Blocks of land were also granted to the church as individual kingdoms converted to Christianity in the decades following 590.

THE SPREAD OF CHRISTIANITY

Christianity had entered Roman Britain by about 180 and spread steadily, but lost numbers and influence in the waves of invasions by the Germani. One of the few mentions of the early Christian church in Britannia was the attention focused on the Briton Pelagius, who denied the concept of original sin. The Pelagian heresy was repudiated by the Council of Carthage in 416, but its continued popularity among the remnants of Roman villa aristocracy required formal visits by Bishop St. Germanus in 429 and again in 446 to root out the heresy. Another bishop, St. Palladius, was sent to Ireland in 431 in the front line of Christian efforts to evangelize more widely across the isles. A young Briton, kidnapped and enslaved by Irish pirates, would escape and eventually return to Ireland after Palladius, baptizing widely and eventually becoming St. Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland. Outside of Ireland, however, these efforts were largely unsuccessful against the many varieties of beliefs that jostled for ascendancy in the chaos of post-Roman Britain.

The first major attempt by the Roman church to re-Christianize the kingdoms came in 597 with the Roman monk Augustine, sent by Pope Gregory the Great, who had purportedly seen young boys from England and had called them “angels, not Angles.” Augustine entered the kingdom of Kent, where the king was married to a Christian queen from the continental kingdom of the Franks. The king, Aethelbert, converted to his wife’s faith, and Augustine went on to establish a monastery at Canterbury—the site of the first archbishopric, with Augustine himself as archbishop. Other conversions in other kingdoms followed, but initially these gains were offset by the rejection of Christianity in several royal households.

In fact, Christianity regained its influence in the former Britannia only owing to the enduring work of the Christians who had fled

westward to Ireland when the Roman Empire collapsed. Ireland had been dotted with monasteries since the fifth century, and it was the Irish monks who effectively preserved and then spread Christianity eastward through much of Britain, founding important monasteries in the process. By the 630s, the southern kings were willing to listen with new ears to the missionaries from these monasteries, and one king after another embraced the faith of the Irish church. Before the end of the seventh century, all of the kings of the British Isles were Christianized. As the ruler went, so also went his subjects. Monks traveled throughout the countryside to spread the faith and to establish new religious houses, for both monks and nuns, across the Isles.

The success of the Irish church posed serious problems for the Christian leaders in Rome, for the Irish ecclesiastics were organized differently and the Irish church calendar calculated differently than Rome's. The 664 Synod of Whitby was convened to address some of these discrepancies and to impose conformity with the practices of Rome, including the dates of church feasts and holy days and the appropriate style of the tonsure, the outward and visible sign of monasticism. The allegiance to the new faith by English kings was crucial, especially because the tax assessments levied by the kings specifically for the churches provided essential financial support. By the early eighth century, many former Roman towns had been converted into sites for cathedrals and monasteries, often with forts built by the Romans used as the heart of these new religious communities and towns developing outside the gates of the church complex proper.

England remained a loose conglomeration of individual kingdoms throughout the 600s and 700s, but over time certain kingdoms gained greater power than their neighbors, and their rulers functioned as overkings to the entire region. The three main overkingdoms during the eighth century were Mercia to the west (encompassing much of Wales and the western Midlands of present-day England), Wessex to the south, and Northumbria to the north. Of these three, Mercia enjoyed the earliest supremacy, with kings Aethelbald (716–757) and Offa (757–796) recognized as the undisputed rulers of the region. Offa himself was regarded by Charlemagne as an equal counterpart to the king of the Franks and was able to force Wessex to recognize his overlordship after 782. But Mercian supremacy did not last. Dynastic battles and bloody uprisings characterized all three of the major kingdoms. By 825 Offa's successors had been forced to cede much of Wessex back to the Wessex king, and by 830 much of Mercia had also been compelled to recognize the overlordship of Ecgberht of Wessex.

VIKING INVASIONS AND THE DANE-LAW

Internal dynastic disputes paled in comparison with the wave of Viking invasions that began in the 860s, however, as pirates and then settlers from both Denmark and Norway spread across Western Europe and the British Isles. Population pressures at home and awareness of English resources gathered from trade abroad fueled the waves of incomers. Norwegian Vikings tended to settle mostly in the west, in Scotland, Ireland, Wales, and Cornwall; Danish Vikings—the word signified “pirate” and was applied with equal vehemence to both groups of invaders—targeted the lands to the east. The Danish Vikings faced the combined forces of Aethelred and Alfred, the grandsons of Ecgberht of Wessex, but despite initial resistance the Danish armies appeared invincible.

Alfred, by 871 the king of Wessex, was able to forestall complete disaster through a series of money payments to the Danes, and in 878 he earned his reputation as the king who saved Wessex and the Angles generally by dealing a forceful blow to the Danish army. The Danish leader and Alfred came to terms that limited Danish settlements to the eastern half of England, an area known as the Dane-law that ran from London northwards to York. Alfred, for his part, continued to strengthen his Wessex kingdom, often by establishing fortresses that soon attracted trade and commerce. Towns sprang up around these defense strongholds. The marriage of Alfred’s daughter to Aethelred of Mercia firmly and permanently joined Mercia and Wessex, further consolidating the power of the English against that of the Danes and leading Alfred to refer to himself as King of the Anglo-Saxons.

The Danes for their part had established their own society in the Dane-law, with laws and religious practices that differed markedly from those in Alfred’s England. When Alfred’s successors, Edward the Elder, Athelstan, and Edmund, succeeded in reconquering and re-Christianizing the Dane-law by the early 900s, they had to accommodate a number of distinctive legal and social practices introduced by the Danish invaders. Alfred’s heirs were powerful enough to compel the submission not only of the Danes but also of the kings of Scotland, Wales, and the formerly independent kingdom of Northumbria. A 973 pageant marked the formal “submission” of eight kings in the Isles to the overlordship of Eadgar, Edward’s grandson. This fealty by no means precluded the consolidation of individual power under each of these kings; the Scots were developing a strong separate kingdom that remained relatively impervious to the influence of their Anglo-Saxon

neighbors, and Wales remained formally independent, although bound by strong ties to the Wessex king.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

As the kings of Wessex gradually increased their kingdoms and secured their powers, they began to refocus their attention away from constant battle toward the establishment of systems of local government that would endure in peace. England was reorganized into a system of shires, each under the control of a local magnate called an ealdorman—later to be known as an earl. Each shire was further subdivided into portions generally called hundreds (referred to as “wapentake” in the Dane-law). Each hundred was itself split into 10 smaller units or households, known as “tithings,” which were responsible for local law enforcement and administration of the laws of king and ealdorman. Within a generation, one of these administrators would become known as the shire-reeve, or sheriff, an office that would assume great power under Eadgar’s heirs.

Peace, however difficult to establish, contributed to the further expansion of the monastic system throughout the kingdom. Monasteries and religious houses, particularly those under the Benedictine rule, were supported by royal patronage and formed the basis for a scholastic life as rich in its way as the religious treasuries were in theirs. Religious officials, from archbishop to bishop to abbot, held positions as royal advisors in the households of each of Alfred’s successors, and by the time Eadgar was crowned in 973—at the same time during which he received the fealty of the eight kings of the Isles—the focal point of the coronation was the anointing of the ruler with holy oils. Indeed, the coronation had been delayed until Eadgar reached his 30th birthday, the earliest age at which a man might become an ordained priest. Thus the king had become nearly divine, an instrument of God on earth, recognized as such through elaborate rituals and association with the sacred.

NEW INVASIONS AND THE LAST OF THE ANGLO-SAXON KINGS

Eadgar, that divinely royal king, died in 975 and left behind two young sons. Within three years the heir, Edward (975–978), had been murdered and replaced by Aethelred (978–1016), the younger son and the man doomed to be known throughout history as “the Unready.” Aethelred ruled until 1016 over a kingdom once more preyed on by

Viking invaders, this time by a powerful military machine led by Swein, the king of a newly united Denmark and Norway. Heavy raids began in 991 and continued even after Aethelred paid large sums to forestall further invasion. The money itself only whetted the invaders' appetites, and by 1002 Aethelred ordered the massacre of all Danes living on English lands, even in those areas of the Dane-law that were by now peaceful regions of Aethelred's expansive kingdom. Swein retaliated by leading an invasion in person in 1003, inaugurating a decade of attack. By 1013, the residents of the Dane-law were ready to jettison the king who had been unable to protect them, and within the year Aethelred had been forced to flee to the continent, where he sought the protection of the powerful Duke of Normandy, his father-in-law. The house of Wessex had been defeated. In 1014 Swein's younger son Cnut (1014–1035, sometimes referred to as Canute) succeeded as king of the Dane-law. By 1017 he was the recognized king of all of what was now being referred to as England. He claimed both Denmark and Norway as well by 1028, uniting the three kingdoms in the North Sea Empire.

Cnut divided England into four separate earldoms—Northumbria, East Anglia, Mercia, and Wessex—and replaced English earls with Danish noblemen. One result was that a period of serious political backbiting and intrigue followed Cnut's death in 1035, ending only with the coronation in 1043 of Edward (1043–1066), who would be sainted as "the Confessor" for his piety. His ascension temporarily restored the Wessex dynasty. Edward's kingdom enjoyed efficient local government, especially under the office of the sheriff. Edward's father, Aethelred, had already established a remarkably productive system of local taxation, first to pay the Danes to forgo invasion and then to support Cnut's standing army. Edward used both of these tools, government and taxation, to great effect. He also continued his grandfather's emphasis on the sanctity of the king, further emphasizing the holy nature of his secular office by surrounding himself with clerks and advisors chosen from monastic houses. One of these clerical positions would evolve into the office of the royal chancellor. And he began the construction of a new abbey that would become Westminster Abbey.

Edward presided over a kingdom that boasted a rapidly growing population, an increasingly complex system of agriculture, and a vast increase in new towns and urban centers that supported not only local markets but also the guilds that sprang up to organize craftsmen and artisans. In the countryside small churches began to supplement the work of the cathedrals and monasteries, often built under the direction

of the local aristocrat who wanted a priest to serve his extensive household and his tenantry. There was no parish system in the modern sense, but the foundation was laid as nobles exercised increasing local power, defining themselves no longer solely by military prowess but now, in a time of relative peace, by effective local administration. Military obligations were not forgotten, however; the foundations of the feudal system, with lords responsible for providing men and matériel for their overlords, were laid in Edward's lengthy reign.

By the 1050s it was clear that Edward would die childless. Many feared that the Norwegian kings would attempt another invasion to reclaim the throne that had been Cnut's. One of the four earls, Godwine of Wessex, mounted an unsuccessful coup that illustrated the problems that awaited any new king. Godwine's two sons, Harold and Tostig, had already inherited the earldoms of Wessex and Northumbria, together wielding tremendous power and appearing to be the logical choices as Edward's successors. The brothers fell out, however, and when Edward died in 1066 they were sworn enemies, rivals for the throne that Edward had left to Harold, who reigned from January through October that year. The resultant battles provided the opportunity for an illegitimate descendant of the Normans, William, to muster his own forces and to invade. William claimed that Harold had secretly agreed to support William's claims to the throne instead of his own, and the overall sense of chaos was increased with the assertion of claims by the king of Norway and by Harold's brother Tostig. Harold himself defeated these two claimants and then met William on a hill near Hastings, on English soil, as sworn rivals for the kingship of England. Harold's death gave William the impetus he needed to advance on London, and he moved troops toward the city, leaving destruction in his wake. His triumph was complete when he received the fealty of the nobles of England. The Anglo-Saxon royal dynasties were gone. The Normans, allied with the English royal family only by marriage and not by blood, were the last invaders to conquer the Isles.

3

Medieval Britain

THE NORMAN KINGS: CONFLICTED ALLEGIANCES AND COMPETING CLAIMS

The consecration of William (1066–1087), a ceremony signifying his position as both secular and divine leader, took place amid chaos. His Norman guards, alarmed by the shouts of his supporters, set fire to the houses near Westminster Abbey to deter William's enemies. The resultant disaster nearly cut short the ceremony before the holy oils could be applied. Was this a message that William's hold on England was in jeopardy?

William certainly acted to consolidate his power as quickly as possible, doing so at the expense of the Anglo-Saxon aristocracy. The first five years of his reign witnessed continual rebellion and opposition, put down by force. Lands confiscated by the new king were given to the Norman aristocracy in exchange for money, military service, and attestations of loyalty. The system of feudal relations that had begun under the Anglo-Saxon kings and the range of feudal dues paid by vassals to their overlords were strengthened and enlarged through a sophisticated bureaucratic apparatus designed to ensure that money and power remained under the new king's control. An army of

educated priests—clerics—continued to fill the positions of clerks in the royal household, also acting in many instances as the king's advisors and superintending many of the bureaucratic functions of the kingdom. The innovations of feudalism revolved around male power, with women's roles becoming more sharply defined and frequently, especially for noble women, more constrained. The emergence of courtly literature that glorified chivalric codes reinforced notions of ideal womanhood among the elite, although the reality of women's lives even in the noble class was often harsh and even brutal.

The feudal organization of society, with military service, feudal dues, and loyalty moving upward from vassal to crown and honors and protection moving downward from crown to vassal, rested on the organization of the land itself into a system referred to as manorialism. The organization of land into parcels called manors, which had begun in the Anglo-Saxon period, gradually became the norm, both in law and in practice: the crown granted manors to his vassals, who in turn could subdivide them and lease them to tenants through a variety of methods, ranging from freehold (inheritable in perpetuity) and copyhold (held and inherited for a space of time measured by the lives of the tenants, with three lives becoming the most common) to leasehold (held through a lease granted for a term of years). Much of this was organized under the umbrella of primogeniture, the practice of leaving estates to the eldest male heir in order to make sure they remained whole and therefore powerful. Peasants were required to work for the lord of the manor in a system that was legally codified into serfdom, wherein they were bound to the land; serfs were not slaves, in that they could not be bought and sold, but they were the unfree labor on which the manorial system rested. Serfdom persisted through the 15th century in England and Wales, although it was obsolete in Scotland at least a century earlier. All of these innovations and more were recorded in what is perhaps the most famous artifact of William's bureaucracy, the Domesday survey, commissioned in 1086. The survey resulted in the Great and Little Domesday books, in which such information as acreage, titles, rents, livestock, and labor were recorded for each estate and manor in England. Not only did this survey provide a snapshot of England in the late 11th century, but it also served as an important resource for generations to come for setting levels of taxation, collecting feudal dues, and settling land disputes.

Within a generation of William's accession, England had become a virtual extension of Normandy, with Norman nobility and French language and culture joined by a continental contempt for the "barbaric" Celtic cultures of the Welsh and Scots, whose lands remained outside

of William's control. Even continental architecture supplanted Anglo-Saxon in the churches and cathedrals that were built and rebuilt after the conquest. But strong ties to Normandy would ultimately cause long-term issues of conflicted allegiance for William's heirs. William himself, as both king of England and Duke of Normandy, owed homage only to the king of France. His Norman nobility, for their part, owed fealty to him both as Duke of Normandy and as king of England. When those roles were separated, as they soon would be, the aristocracy with ties to both England and the continent would face challenges to its loyalty.

This problem emerged almost immediately after William's consecration and even more strongly after his death, as the ducal title of Normandy and the conquered crown of England were inherited by two sons, Robert (Duke of Normandy) and William Rufus (king of England, 1087–1100). Tensions were temporarily resolved when in 1096 Robert gave the duchy over to the custody of William Rufus while he himself joined the Crusades, in exchange for a large payment from his brother. William Rufus now held both titles, simplifying the questions of allegiance among his aristocracy. As king of England, William Rufus was a marked contrast to the pious ruler his father had been. He tended to delay filling empty positions in the church hierarchy as long as possible—he waited years to fill the vacant archbishopric of Canterbury, for instance—preferring to enjoy these incomes for himself. At the same time, on the continent, the pope was asserting new authority over prelates in every kingdom, and many English ecclesiasts found it simplest to place loyalty to the pope well above loyalty to a worldly and licentious king who refused even to marry and fulfill his duty to secure a peaceful succession.

When William Rufus died in 1100 in a hunting accident, he left no heir. Robert, returning from the Crusades, was expected to claim not only his own duchy but also his brother's English holdings. But a third brother, Henry, was more nimble, claiming the English crown as Henry I (1100–1135) just before Robert's return. The renewed problem of conflicting allegiances for those with lands in both England and Normandy was once again temporarily resolved on a practical level when Robert was captured by Henry's men in 1106 and imprisoned until his death in 1134.

FAMILY QUARRELS AND CIVIL WAR

Despite Henry's efforts at forging alliances, both to secure his English throne and to protect his duchy of Normandy, he was unable

to arrange a peaceful succession. After the death of his son in 1120, he married a second wife but within a few years was forced to face the fact that there would be no legitimate male heirs. In 1125, therefore, he called a meeting of his nobles, directing them to formally acknowledge his daughter Matilda, his only remaining legitimate child, as his rightful heir. Matilda, the young widow of Holy Roman Emperor Henry V, was rapidly married off to Geoffrey Plantagenet, the heir to the powerful duchy of Anjou, in order to link both Normandy and England to Anjou. Henry soon quarreled with Matilda and Geoffrey, however, forcing his nobles to choose between loyalty to England and loyalty to the Angevins. When Henry died in 1135, the two factions were pitted against one another. Henry's supporters transferred their allegiance to his nephew Stephen (1135–1154), who beat his cousins to London and was crowned and anointed king just before Christmas in 1135; he secured the loyalty of those who had promised to support Matilda by arguing that the 1125 oath had been sworn under duress. Powerful Norman magnates, who had estates on both sides of the channel, generally agreed that supporting Stephen was the best way to protect their own extensive interests. Matilda, who used the title Dowager Empress, and Geoffrey established a rival court, but Stephen was able to maintain his hold on power until his capture by opposition forces in 1141.

Now the throne was claimed both by Stephen's cousin, Empress Matilda (sometimes referred to as Maud), and by his wife, Queen Matilda, who eventually secured Stephen's release. A low-level civil war ensued, definitively ending in 1153 only when Stephen was able to secure a negotiated peace with Henry, the son and heir of Empress Matilda and Geoffrey. Henry had inherited both Anjou and Normandy on his father's death in 1151 and gained the province of Aquitaine through his marriage in 1152 to Eleanor, the ex-wife of French king Louis VII, making him a formidable opponent or an equally formidable ally. Stephen adopted Henry as his heir in 1153 and died the following year, making way for what would eventually be labeled the Plantagenet dynasty, so called after Geoffrey's habit of wearing a sprig of broom shrub (Latin name *planta genista*) in his hat.

Henry II's (1154–1189) empire was enormous. He continued to owe allegiance to the king of France, but his riches far exceeded those of his overlord. England was merely one piece of a much larger pie that included Anjou, Maine, Normandy, Aquitaine, Nantes, and Brittany on the continent, and it was in no way the most pressing of Henry's priorities. Within the Isles, he regained certain portions of northern England that had been taken over by the Scots king, negotiated a

peace of sorts with the dynastic families of Wales, and in 1169 began his project of conquering Ireland. The Irish invasion was funded in part by the pope, who saw Henry as a necessary tool in the reform of the Irish church, where the practices of Catholicism continued to differ significantly from the orthodoxy dictated by Rome. It took more than a century, but by the 1290s, much of Ireland had been brought temporarily under direct English control, with English institutions of law and commerce joined to, and often swamping, those of the Irish kings.

But business on the continent was always more immediate for Henry than business in the Isles, and he was generally content to leave the day-to-day oversight of his English kingdom to his bureaucracy, spending some two-thirds of his own time in his French holdings. England gained his personal attention only rarely, as, for instance, when his friend Thomas Becket, whom he had elevated to the archbishopric of Canterbury, defied the king in the matter of criminal behavior by priestly clerks. Henry demanded that all felons, including these clerks, be tried in the king's courts; Becket argued that such men continue to be tried in ecclesiastical courts, which ran on an entirely separate track independent from the secular system, and where erring clerics were often spared any punishment. Becket fled to France in 1164 after being convicted of contempt and malfeasance but returned in 1170 and was murdered by Henry's men in the sanctuary of his own cathedral, after a casual remark by an enraged king. This episode, although securing Becket's canonization, had little effect on Henry's reputation as king, and he continued to enjoy tremendous power.

Henry was not so lucky in his family of four sons, who were early at one another's throats as each sought the largest part of Henry's broad dominions. Henry parceled out the land but retained the real power for himself, and rebellion was a chronic accompaniment to the king's later years. Two of his sons died, and his preference for his youngest and least-able son John led Richard, the other survivor, to seek the help of the king of France to secure his own inheritance. Richard was successful; on Henry's death in 1189, he inherited not only England as Richard I "The Lionheart" (1189–1199) but also Anjou, Normandy, and Aquitaine. Ireland went to John and Brittany to a grandson. This enormous realm required enormous bureaucracies. The household of the king had increased dramatically under Henry, and under Richard these administrators were even more necessary: Richard left on a Crusade to Jerusalem in 1190 and lay captive for months, even as his men thwarted a rebellion by his brother John. Like his father, Richard spent most of his time on the continent, regarding England as a lesser part of his kingdom.

Richard died in 1199 without heirs, and both Normandy and England went to his brother John, the Lord of Ireland. For four years John (1199–1216) spent most of his time on the continent, offending almost everyone and losing many of his continental holdings through his shabby treatment of his vassal lords. By the end of 1203 he was forced to retreat back across the Channel, where he focused his attention on quarreling with his English nobles and his English church and enforcing unprecedently high levels of taxation. Rebellion in 1214–1215 forced John to accept a statement of liberties and a clarification of the mutual obligations and duties within the feudal system, which became known as the *Magna Carta*, or Great Charter.

John had no intention of adhering to the charter, however; it was a delaying tactic while he gathered forces to fight in the civil war that broke out in earnest in September 1215. When John died, 13 months later, the two sides were at odds over the heir to the throne: should it be John's young son, Henry, whose minority would guarantee a ruling council and could well open the doors to corruption and disaster, or should it be Louis, a princeling of France, whose ties to the kingdom were thin at best? A series of battles led to a treaty under which Louis gave up his claims to the throne, and nine-year-old Henry was proclaimed Henry III (1216–1272). He ruled on his own only after 1232, but the council ruling in his behalf carefully avoided many of the pitfalls of minority kingships, and when Henry began to wield power independently, he did so in a setting where the king's continental holdings were considered increasingly less important than his kingdom of England. English king and lords were English first, Norman second. After 1259, this reorientation was reinforced as Henry's French holdings were reduced by treaty to a tiny proportion of those lands once held by his grandfathers.

TAXATION, REPRESENTATION, AND RELIGION

The maintenance of a kingdom on two continents was costly, and the early medieval kings proved remarkably resourceful at finding new ways to raise money from their subjects. In addition to the potentially extravagant income that could be realized through the use of patronage and the manipulation of feudal dues—something that Edward I and II would take to an extreme level—these kings began to experiment with direct taxes based on moveable goods as well as land. Customs duties also became a fixed part of the Crown income during this period. The English church was supported as well through a new body of taxes, many of which were first levied to pay for the Crusades

but which were quickly made a regular part of church finance. Papal authority demanded these taxes, but the popes also clearly saw that the judicious assignment of this income directly to the English church would strengthen the ties between Rome and England.

All of these new taxes had to be collected. Collection of land and property taxes required the direct cooperation of the landowning nobility, the magnates; collection of customs duties required the cooperation of the merchants of the towns. Thus it was that kings began to summon the men of the shires, chosen by their peers to represent them in these important matters, to parlay—to discuss the nature of taxes and the reasons for new levies. These discussions, or parliaments, inaugurated the necessary relationship between consultation with the substantial men of the kingdom, on the one hand, and the collection of taxes, on the other. The great nobility had always had access to the king's ear. It was the need to include lesser men in this conversation that began the move to an established and formal parliament with two separate houses. Thus, the knights who had formerly been completely attached to their overlord's households were given new responsibilities beyond their traditional military functions. By the 1100s, knights were becoming landed gentry, beginning the transformation into a class that would bear the responsibility for ensuring that the king's laws were enforced even far away from the king himself. The dispensation of justice in turn more and more relied on jury trials presided over by traveling circuit judges, rather than on the traditional trial by sword, for nobility, and trial by ordeal of fire or water, for others less fortunate.

The medieval English church remained firmly tied to the church at Rome, even with the development of church taxes that were levied almost solely for the use of the English church. In 1066, there were approximately 50 religious houses in England; 150 years later, there were 700, including orders for women. Joining the traditional orders of monks and nuns were mendicant friars, who crossed parish boundaries to minister to men and women across the land, administering sacraments especially in the new towns that sprang up as population pressures increased. Pilgrimages to religious sites became a common practice, and even the smallest churches claimed significance through the variety of relics they preserved. (Nineteenth-century American author Mark Twain would say of his own European tours that he had seen enough splinters of the True Cross to shingle a barn.) England's few Jews would be formally expelled in 1290 under Edward I, not to return until the 1650s. They had already been subject to increasing persecution: herded into Jewries and forced to wear identifying

badges, accused of ritual murder of children, and slaughtered in large numbers in York and London.

EDWARD I AND II: RELATIONS WITH WALES, SCOTLAND, AND IRELAND

Like his father Henry, Edward I (1272–1307) spent a great deal of time in his French lands, especially the profitable wine-making region of Gascony, after his succession. Within Britain, however, his attention was focused on Wales, where the conquest of the Welsh kings proved relatively rapid for one of Edward's wealth. Wales had been the haven of Anglo-Saxons fleeing the Norman invasion, just as it had been a retreat for the Celtic tribes menaced by Anglo-Saxons. After 1066, Welsh princes had, in theory, gradually acknowledged the overlordship of the English king, but in practice they had continued to rule their lands as though the Norman kings were far distant neighbors. In 1267 Henry III had granted Llywelyn ap Gruffydd the hereditary title of Prince of Wales, formally recognizing him as the leader of all the Welsh dynasties in the newly created principality of Wales. But his son Edward I, with many fewer continental distractions consuming his time and his money, was determined to conquer Wales for his own use. Llywelyn ap Gruffydd was ambushed in 1282, and by 1284 the conquest of the principality was complete. The territory was divided into four shires, modeled after English shires. Edward allowed the continuation of some Welsh laws and customs but only when they did not significantly clash with the common law of England. Administration of the marches, the borderlands between England and Wales, was given into the hands of large lordships known as the Marcher lordships. These Marcher Lords, members of powerful Norman families, ruled according to their own laws rather than the laws of the king and established administrative bureaucracies and castles to rival those of the English crown. This autonomy would end only under the reign of Henry VIII, with the passage of two Laws in Wales Acts in 1535 and 1542.

Edward was also hungry to consolidate control over the lands to his north. But Scotland had a single and remarkably stable royal family, blessed with a series of exceptionally long-lived kings in the House of Dunkeld, and an independent Scottish church recognized as such by the pope. Indeed, Scotland occasionally ventured south to acquire its own new territory: Northumbria lay in Scottish hands for two decades, and the Scottish kings forged strong relationships with other kingdoms on the European continent, especially France.

Despite his reputation as “the hammer of the north,” Edward’s hunger for northern expansion remained unsated. His efforts instead helped touch off the Anglo-Scottish Wars, also known as the Scottish Wars of Independence (1296–1357). War began after King John of Scotland (crowned 1296; abdicated 1296) declared allegiance to Edward but simultaneously conducted secret negotiations with France, leading Edward to invade. Edward was gradually able to assert control and to gain the allegiance of many Scottish lords but met with strong resistance under the leadership of the famous William Wallace, who eluded English control until his capture and execution for treason in 1305. After Wallace’s death, Scottish lord Robert the Bruce rescinded his own allegiance to Edward and instead claimed the throne as Robert I in 1306, consolidating his power and defeating rivals to the Scottish crown.

Edward himself died in 1307, to be succeeded by his son, Edward II (1307–1327). This succession was a gift to Robert, for while the young Edward continued to avidly collect the feudal dues known as purveyance that were earmarked for the provisioning of troops, using them instead to enrich his own household, he showed little interest in beating back the near constant waves of Scottish attacks in the north of England. Robert’s decisive victory in 1314 against the English forces at Bannockburn secured his own kingship, and the defeat of the remaining English armies at Berwick in 1318 confirmed Scottish independence. However, despite his lack of interest in financing or waging war, Edward refused to renounce his powers over Scotland, and the Scottish lords eventually appealed to the pope for formal recognition of Scotland’s independence. Edward remained recalcitrant, and the fighting continued until he was forced off the throne by his wife Isabella (regent 1327–1330), “the She-Wolf of France.”

The coup was supported by English nobles who had long objected to Edward’s failure to effectively prosecute the northern wars, his high-handed use of purveyance and other feudal powers, and his elevation of a commoner as his favorite. These magnates had formally presented their grievances to Edward in 1311, in the form of a 41-article document delineating limits on the power of the crown and affirming the importance of Parliament and the nobles. These so-called ordinances were accepted by Edward only under great pressure, but by 1320 he had ceased to honor them altogether. Noble anger was accompanied by generalized wrath over high taxes and expensive wars. This unrest was worsened by the Great Famine of 1315–1317, which put a hard stop to the unprecedented population growth of the previous three centuries and led to devastating years of disease and crime, contributing

as well to military defeats and a civil war that erupted in 1321. Support for the crown declined even further when Edward entered into a war against France, during which he seized the lands of his French wife, Isabella. Edward's many opponents—and their private armies—joined forces with Isabella and her lover, Marcher Lord Roger Mortimer, on the continent and invaded the kingdom in 1326. Edward was forced to abdicate in 1327 in favor of his 14-year-old son, Edward III (1327–1377). Edward II died in custody shortly thereafter, and the English crown recognized Scottish independence under Robert I in 1328. Robert would be succeeded by his son, David I (1329–1371), who died childless; the crown was assumed by the Stewart dynasty under Robert II (1371–1390) and then Robert III (1390–1406).

The situation in Ireland also posed ongoing problems for the English kings. John I had been appointed Lord of Ireland, a new title, in 1177; Ireland was technically conquered by the Normans in 1169 for the pope, Adrian IV, who delegated its administration back to the English crown. When John succeeded to the English throne after the death of his brother Richard, he retained the title and forced the Irish lords to accept English law. His son Henry III also maintained the title of Lord of Ireland, essentially redefining the lordship as a formally recognized component of the English crown. Henry encouraged the growth of a Norman-Irish aristocracy, members of which would eventually serve in the Irish parliament that would be established by Edward I in 1297. But English control over Ireland was challenged by the hunger of the Scottish Robert I, who dreamt of a “greater Scotia” that would encompass both Scotland and Ireland. His brother, Edward Bruce, staged an invasion of Ireland in 1315 and was declared High King of Ireland in 1316. This signaled a renewed struggle for power that pitted the Norman-Irish lords against the Scots, on the one hand, and the Irish clan chiefs, on the other, and resulted in the defeat of Edward Bruce and the Scots in 1318—a defeat helped along in part by the Great Famine, which made it nearly impossible to provision troops. This struggle permanently weakened the hold of the medieval English kings over Ireland, and the chronic problems of war with France soon took precedence over the guerilla warfare with the Irish clans. English influence in Ireland had contracted by the 1400s to a narrow area around Dublin, known as the Pale.

WAR, PLAGUE, AND UPRISINGS

England's 1328 recognition of Scottish independence was temporary. Within a few years, Scottish magnates who had sided with the English

and thus lost their Scottish territory felt powerful enough to try to reclaim their forfeited lands, and they invaded in 1332, reigniting a war that would end only in 1357 with the Treaty of Berwick. France joined on the side of the Scots in 1337. Edward III, confronted with a two-front war, preferred to focus on what he believed to be the greater enemy. He claimed the French crown in 1340, setting off the episodes that became known, erroneously, as the Hundred Years' War. It was war in the plural, punctuated with short intervals of peace, lasting until 1453 and worsened by the global disaster of the Black Death, the wave of bubonic and pneumonic plague that killed some 30 percent of the European population between 1348 and 1351. Subsequent waves came in 1360 and 1375. Edward himself gave up his claims to the French crown in 1360, although he retained all of his French possessions. This marked a pause in the war, which erupted again in 1369–1389 and yet again in 1415–1453, by which time England would be shorn of all of its French holdings except the port city of Calais, which had been annexed by Edward III in 1347.

The wars themselves were fought not simply on French soil but throughout the western regions of the continent and at sea. These wars, like the ongoing battles against the Scots, were paid for through new and heavy taxes across the kingdom, including unprecedented levels of taxation on the clergy. Taxes were met with widespread resistance, and many of Edward's parliaments were characterized by acrimony, culminating in the so-called Good Parliament of 1376. It was this parliament that adopted impeachment as a tool of parliamentary and therefore public control over bad ministers, with Edward furiously forced to dismiss a number of his closest advisors.

Edward's death in the following year placed his 10-year-old grandson Richard II (1377–1399) on the throne, introducing all the problems of a minority rule. Richard's ruling council had to address serious uprisings that were a response not only to the ongoing and escalating expenses of war but also to the massive economic and social dislocations still being played out after the waves of plague, the last of which ended just before Richard's ascension. The population loss was devastating, plummeting from 4.8 million in 1348 to just over 2 million in 1400. Ironically, after the first years of shock and grief, many survivors found their lives considerably improved: many peasants were able to increase the acreage they leased and worked; wages for both male and female artisans and other laborers increased; rents decreased. Landlords, on the other hand, found their income significantly contracting because there were so many fewer renters, and the agricultural innovations introduced in the early 1300s were abandoned owing to expense

and lack of labor. Despite parliamentary statutes as early as the 1350s designed to keep labor on the land, the system of serfdom was fatally injured (although not immediately destroyed) by the plague, and the reactions by landlords were varied. Some landowners sought to retain their previous ways of life at any cost and used draconian pressures to reinforce their economic and social powers. Others began to adopt the new, more rational land use practices that would become more common in the 15th and 16th centuries.

The church as an institution suffered a significant decline in prestige as a result of the plague. Priests, serving the stricken, had died at even higher rates than the general public, and their replacements often took holy orders as a last resort, with neither the interest nor the ability to fulfill their duties. Waves of anticlericalism—critiques of the institution—were accompanied by the emergence of such heresies as John Wycliffe's Lollardism, which emerged in the 1380s to reject many of the sacraments of the Church. Wycliffe's theological innovations replaced transubstantiation (a complete transformation of the elements in the Eucharist) with consubstantiation (a belief that bread and wine remained bread and wine while also becoming the body and blood of Christ) and called for the translation of the Bible into the vernacular. The Lollards' denunciations of Church wealth and ungodly rulers threatened both religious and secular power, and those who escaped prosecution were forced to flee to the continent.

All of these pressures helped contribute to the social unrest that under Richard II exploded into rebellion and threatened to become revolution. The most serious of these rebellions was the episode known as the Peasants' Revolt in 1381. The changes in rural life involved in the shift from grain to sheep farming, the apparently endless tax increases to fund war with France, the increased assertiveness of peasants and artisans no longer so closely bound to traditional social and economic structures, and dissatisfaction with a church apparently incapable of fulfilling its duties—all of these contributed to the revolt led by Wat Tyler and John Ball. The rebels moved from the countryside into London to appeal to the new king and attacked many of the traditional symbols of a repressive old monarchy, throwing open prison doors, sacking the homes of royal ministers, and kidnapping and killing the archbishop of Canterbury. The rebellion was put down with force, its leaders were killed; none of the demands of the rebels were met, although the hated poll, or head, tax (at a uniform 1s. per head, this was a particularly difficult burden for the poor) that had sparked the uprising was abandoned for many years.



Wat Tyler, seen here in a 19th-century engraving of the Peasants' Revolt of 1381, led marchers into London to protest rising taxes and changes to traditional rural life. A large crowd, led by Tyler and John Ball, attacked royal ministers and murdered the archbishop of Canterbury before they were subdued. Tyler was killed by William Walworth, mayor of London. (Ridpath, John Clark, *Ridpath's History of the World*, 1901)

Richard himself, at the age of 14, met the appeal of the rebels without sympathy. Advised but not led by a series of ruling councils, he now began to assert his own authority. Unfortunately, despite his intelligence, he alienated many of his supporters through his arrogance and his open promotion of royal favorites. The so-called Merciless Parliament of 1388 responded by resorting to the still novel tool of impeachment, infuriating Richard but ridding the government of incompetent ministers, many of whom were exiled or executed. Richard delayed his revenge for several years, but in 1397 the king made his move against his magnates. Several nobles were killed or exiled, including the man who would eventually depose the king, his cousin Henry Bolingbroke, and Richard confiscated their estates. However, the king's visit to Ireland provided his enemies with the opportunity they needed to arrange his forced abdication in 1399. He died in prison in 1400.

CLAIMS TO FRANCE AND THE WARS OF THE ROSES (1399–1485)

When Henry Bolingbroke became Henry IV (1399–1413), his accession was based more on raw power than on his relatively weak blood claims via the house of Lancaster. Not surprisingly, the early years of Henry IV's reign were punctuated by rebellion, including an uprising by Owain Glyndŵr that liberated Wales temporarily from English control in 1405. War with France was renewed despite a truce entered into by Richard II in 1396, and war with Scotland had continued at intervals since the Treaty of Berwick in 1357. Ireland entered a brief period of respite from direct English control while the English king consolidated his gains and fought his enemies. Within England, ongoing resistance to Henry's coup was expressed in a variety of ways, beginning with a series of three failed rebellions led by the noble Percy family between 1403 and 1408. Other attempts followed, culminating in a 1413 conspiracy to restore a spurious Richard II, who was claimed to have survived his abdication. Ill health as well as political resistance dogged the king, whose death in 1413 led to the succession of his son, Henry V (1413–1422).

This Henry was not content to be king of England, and he inaugurated a new push to regain control of France. An astonishing and impressive victory at Agincourt resulted in Henry's marriage to the daughter of the king of France as well as his elevation as heir to the French throne in place of the Dauphin. Although Henry died in 1422, before he could wear the French crown, his infant son Henry VI (1422–1461) became a dual monarch. It was an elusive and costly victory; under the inspired leadership of Joan of Arc, the French regained much of the land claimed by the English kings. Henry VI's marriage to Margaret of Anjou, the niece of the French king, was an abortive attempt to iron out a settlement between the kingdoms, but the French continued their campaign to reconquer their lands, and by the end of 1450 all of Normandy was once again out of English control. Three years later, Gascony also was transferred to France, and English holdings on the continent were limited to Calais. This was a symbolic defeat but also a very costly blow to English trade, as it completely disrupted the wine and cloth trades so crucial to the English economy.

Henry reacted to this set of defeats with a complete breakdown, ushering in a protectorate in 1453–1454 and the intense struggle known as the Wars of the Roses, in which the Lancaster branch of the family (represented by the badge of the red rose) battled the York branch (represented by the white rose) for control of the kingdom. After years

of intrigue and costly bloodshed, the Yorkists prevailed on Parliament to pass the 1460 Act of Accord, which stipulated that Henry's crown would pass to the Yorks on his death, bypassing his own son. The resulting battles ended, with Henry and his French queen Margaret escaping to Scotland, leaving the throne to be claimed by the Yorkist Edward IV (1461–1483). Henry would be captured by Edward and imprisoned in London in 1465, to be briefly restored in 1470 before Edward reclaimed the throne; Henry died in 1471, possibly murdered by his successor. After 1471, Edward's successes rested on a careful extermination of his Lancaster rivals and their supporters (including his own brother, the Duke of Clarence) and generous rewards to his friends and allies.

Edward's restoration focused on stability at home, where he reinvigorated the offices of the royal household—especially the royal exchequer—under his motto, “method and order.” He earned a reputation as a patron of scholars and a collector of illuminated manuscripts. His foreign policies were less successful, including his failed attempts to reconquer both France and Scotland. He died in April 1483, leaving two young sons. Rivalries within the factions of Yorkist supporters emerged with such force that they threatened to plunge the country again into civil war. Edward's only surviving brother, Richard of Gloucester, secured the throne for himself as Richard III (1483–1485) and placed his two nephews in the Tower of London, where they mysteriously disappeared. Historians and amateurs alike have for centuries debated the personality and behavior of Richard III, some claiming that he was personally responsible for the deaths of the boys and others arguing that his reputation for very bad behavior was a result of the propaganda so skillfully promulgated by Henry Tudor, the man who would defeat him on the battlefield at Bosworth in 1485, just two years after Richard's own usurpation.

Henry Tudor's victory over Richard ushered in a new dynasty and a new era, bringing to an end the period of instability that had characterized England in the late Middle Ages. He inherited a kingdom that was almost wholly English, since the severing of ties to France meant that the noble families of the kingdom no longer were buffeted by the pressures of competing loyalties. Scotland was by 1485 still mired in a long period of intermittent civil war under the Stewart kings, punctuated by the assassination of James I (1406–1436) and the accidental death of James II (1436–1460), each of which had resulted in the ascension of a minor heir and the backbiting and power-brokering associated with regencies. In Wales, Welsh nobles could be found on both sides of the Wars of the Roses, and Welsh soldiers had been

instrumental in helping the new king secure the throne. In Ireland, English control remained limited to the Pale. Thus, England by the accession of the Tudors was not yet part of a "Great Britain," but it was almost a nation. Its people were bound together by a common language, a strong church that despite membership in the Roman Catholic community was characterized by peculiarly English laws and customs, and a confidence that England itself was no longer an easy prize for waves of foreign invaders.

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Britain under the Tudors

SECURING THE CROWN

When the Lancastrian Henry Tudor defeated Richard III at Bosworth Field and claimed the throne as Henry VII (1485–1509), he faced several major issues. First, his claims to the throne based on bloodline were dubious at best, traced through illegitimacy on his mother's side. At least half a dozen direct descendants of the Yorkist line had more impressive blood claims to the throne in 1485. Second, he took the throne at a time when no king had held power for more than a dozen years. In fact, England had had eight kings in 86 years, and Henry Tudor himself certainly appeared to be no more capable than his predecessors of taming the lawlessness and violence associated with the Wars of the Roses. And third, the administrative, legal, and fiscal structures of the country were in significant disarray. Henry VII took the throne as a feudal monarch but at a time when feudal structures were in flux; power, allegiance, and order were nowhere near so clearly defined as they had been previously, and independent nobles had been able to exploit this situation to an extent that belied any notion of a single law or a single administrative system for the entire kingdom.

Thus, the new king faced a menu of difficult but crucial tasks: he would have to justify his kingship without relying too heavily on his obviously weak blood claims; he would have to eliminate other contenders for the throne through judicial murder and lavish rewards for service; and he would have to establish his ascendancy *as king*, giver of law, and preserver of peace, demonstrably more powerful than the magnates who had exploited the chaos of constant warfare for their own ends. Few would have bet on Henry. And yet, through a combination of luck, skill, cunning, and hard work—and a very long life—he established a monarchy that was no longer feudal even as it was not yet completely modern.

Henry addressed the question of his legitimacy as king by pointing to divine intervention in his victory over the more powerful Richard III. He also quickly married Elizabeth of York, one of the clutch of Yorkist descendants who could argue against Henry's claims of blood inheritance and who produced for Henry four surviving children. Other Yorkists were unluckier: by 1525, most rivals were dead or exiled. And he beat back two serious attempts to place imposters on the throne: in 1487 the French and Irish invaded under the banner of young Lambert Simnel, who claimed to be the missing earl of Warwick, while in 1491 Perkin Warbeck emerged and claimed to be Richard IV, one of the vanished "Princes in the Tower." Both were quickly defeated, and Henry turned his public relations machine loose with the injunction to implicate Richard III, the "wicked uncle," a task carried out with expedience by Sir Thomas More, William Shakespeare, and others.

Thus, through a series of military victories, political executions, marriages, alliances, and exiles, Henry was able to resolve most of the challenges to his claims of kingship. A more intransigent problem was the strength and independence of the magnates, who had accrued so much autonomy as to be an ongoing threat to the stability of the throne. Henry was especially concerned about the northern magnates, viewing the Marcher Lords who shared his Welsh blood as more dependable allies. These magnates had established not only their own private armies but also their own codes of law and governance. By Henry's accession, feudalism had evolved to largely substitute money payments for military service, which tainted the ties of loyalty and homage that had bound nobles to the medieval kings. The chaos of the Wars of the Roses left many of these money payments uncollected, further weakening the relationships between crown and nobles, especially in the farther reaches of the kingdom. Magnate independence expanded to fill the vacuum created by weak kings, and by 1485 the

social structures of the Middle Ages had significantly decayed. This was a boon on the one hand, because it meant there were opportunities for innovation; it was a problem on the other, because it meant that the Crown would have to work vigorously to reassert itself and to begin to rein in the most powerful of the rival magnates.

CHANGES IN LAW AND ADMINISTRATION

Over the course of his lengthy reign, Henry and his ministers presided over the beginnings of what many historians contend was a veritable revolution in government—the implementation of new and more efficient bureaucracies combined with a renewed emphasis on the central authority of the Crown and its offices. Many of Henry's earliest "innovations" were simply revivals of feudal law and custom that enriched the Crown's coffers. Henry and his administrators began to systematically review all of the Crown's feudal relationships and to collect the dues owed by nobles, nearly doubling the royal income during Henry's reign. His son would continue to tighten up the collection of feudal dues, although by 1540 landowners were protesting so insistently that the Crown had to compromise and formally exempt certain lands from these obligations. The new king further asserted power by levying enormous fines on nobles who retained private standing armies and then magnanimously replacing these impossible terms with stringent but manageable debt payments that kept the magnate under Crown control. The Crown was also lavish with rewards for service, which attracted the lesser nobility to Henry's side.

The Crown's renewed emphasis on law and justice directly attacked the widespread corruption of local legal machinery, most frequently manifested in bribery and forceful coercion of judges and juries. Henry's solution was to pour new strength into the existing system of king's or prerogative courts, reorganizing the Court of Chancery for civil cases and establishing what would become under Henry VIII a separate Court of Star Chamber for criminal cases. These courts were based on the notion of "equity law," law dispensed directly by the Crown and guided by common sense rather than the often-cumbersome machinery of judge-made precedent that was the common law. Under the Stuarts, and after the jury system had been resuscitated and reinvigorated, the Star Chamber would gain notoriety as a place of secret and unjust justice; but during the Tudor period it was a welcome alternative to local courts, a place where justice was dispensed according to the king's law, not the noble's own self-interest, and where decisions were quick, affordable, and accessible. Equal attention and energy

were devoted to reinvigorating other offices of government, expanding statecraft beyond issues of war and diplomacy to include issues of national health and prosperity. Henry VII, in particular, was an able administrator and set in motion new bureaucracies that expanded the power of the crown.

HENRY VIII AND THOMAS WOLSEY

Henry VII ruled for 24 years, a period sufficient to cement into place many of the administrative and judicial changes he had introduced. When he died, the crown passed to his younger son, who became Henry VIII (1509–1547) at the age of 18. “Bluff King Hal” had not initially been schooled for kingship, but his older brother Arthur, the crown prince, had died childless seven years earlier. In one of his father’s diplomatic successes, Arthur had been married to Catherine of Aragon, the eldest daughter of Isabella of Castile and Ferdinand of Aragon, but within months of the wedding the groom was dead. The king toyed with the idea of sending Catherine back to Spain but, loathe to send her dowry home with her, had eventually decided to betroth her to his remaining son. Catherine, age 24, and Prince Henry were married a scant two weeks before his coronation as Henry VIII.

Young Henry inherited a healthy treasury and a land in which the magnates who had so troubled his father had been relatively tamed through liberal distribution of both reward and punishment. (Even the independent Marcher Lords would eventually be fully absorbed into the king’s law, when Wales was formally annexed through two Laws in Wales Acts in 1535 and 1542.) Henry’s undisputed position as heir prevented any outbreak of civil war or disobedience, and his dashing manner and handsome looks inspired his subjects with optimism and a sense of excitement. Here was a king who was also a warrior, built like a lion and dedicated to hunting and chivalry and the old glories of England. Indeed, Henry was uninterested in the tedium of governance and relied instead on skillful ministers, especially the man who would become his chief minister, Thomas Wolsey.

Wolsey, the son of an Ipswich butcher, had risen to his 1509 position as royal chaplain through hard work and intelligence; these same two characteristics would lead him further upward through several bishoprics and the archbishopric of York to appointments as cardinal in 1515 and papal legate in 1524, signals of the pope’s favor and positions of immense power within the church. He was equally successful in gaining secular power, becoming Lord Chancellor in 1513 and eventually uniting the highest positions of church responsibility

with the role of chief minister of the land. Wolsey's humble birth and significant arrogance irritated the nobility, but his shrewd exercise of power forced his enemies to mask their hatred. As archbishop, cardinal, and papal legate, he oversaw every inch of church business within the country; as Lord Chancellor, he controlled, among other things, the courts of Chancery and Star Chamber, thus exercising judicial authority in matters of canon, criminal, and civil law. He also dominated the king's privy chamber, the inner sanctum where influence was exercised, as well as the King's Council, where the business of the realm was crafted. Indeed, Wolsey's combination of both church and secular authority paved the way for Henry's own eventual assumption of dual authority over his subjects through the break with Rome. Wolsey was a highly able administrator and expanded the work of the Crown begun by Henry VII, overseeing kingdom-wide surveys of trade and industry and implementing new types of laws to protect the vulnerable.

Wolsey was particularly interested in diplomacy and international relations—his position as papal legate capitalized on these two areas—and under his tutelage the young Henry VIII entered into a set of alliances that appeared to offset England's relative weakness as a country small in wealth and manpower. Henry's initial attempts in this regard were shaped by his friendly rivalries with the two other young princes of Europe, heirs apparent Francis of France and Charles of Spain, the latter of whom was the nephew of Catherine of Aragon. Henry and Wolsey had to tread carefully in any attempt to strengthen England's position: Scotland, to the north, was allied through marriage and blood ties to France; the Low Countries, the conduit for English trade with the continent, belonged to Spain; and disagreements with either of the other two legs of the diplomatic triangle could result in disaster through trade embargoes or military engagements, neither of which England could afford. Henry joined the papal Holy League in 1511 to retake parts of France, defeating Scotland, France's ally, in 1513 and marrying his sister Mary off to the 60-year-old French king, Louis XII, in 1514. Three months later, Mary was a widow and young Francis, now king Francis I, wound down a war that would re-erupt in 1521.

In 1516, the third prince of the triangle ascended to the throne as Charles I of Spain and also, after 1519, as Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, prompting Wolsey to negotiate a quick alliance between the powerful Spain and the relatively weak England. This alliance was paired with continued assurances of affection for France, demonstrated in 1520 in a contest of chivalry on the Field of Cloth of Gold in Flanders, but both Wolsey and Henry would choose Spain over France, and Charles over Francis, when expedient. All of this was

complicated by two related issues: first, Wolsey coveted the papacy and met Spanish promises of support for his candidacy in 1523 with renewed declarations of war against France; second, Charles V was Catherine's nephew, and when Henry began in 1527 to seek an annulment of his marriage, Wolsey once again began to court French support against the Spanish, who had in the end chosen not to champion him as the new pope.

THE KING'S GREAT MATTER AND THE BREAK WITH ROME

Wolsey failed in the one issue where failure meant complete personal disaster: in Henry's "Great Matter," his desire to be off with his first wife in order to wed the younger, prettier, and presumably more fertile Anne Boleyn. Henry's marriage to Catherine of Aragon had initially been a happy one, but only one child out of many pregnancies had lived beyond infancy, and that child was a girl. Henry became convinced that Catherine's failure—certainly not his own—to produce a healthy son was a sign of God's disapproval of his marriage to his brother's widow, which had required a special dispensation by the pope. Catherine had always maintained that her marriage to Arthur had never been consummated; Henry now chose to believe that she had lied, arguing further that even the pope could not override God's law. He sent Wolsey to Rome to request that Pope Clement VII allow him, Wolsey, to decide the annulment case as papal legate.

However, the pope—since 1527 a prisoner of Catherine's nephew, the Holy Roman emperor—was in no position to grant Wolsey's request. Clement finally formally denied Henry's request for an annulment and sent Wolsey home. Wolsey's death on the road in 1530 spared him the final wrath of his furious king, who had already turned to a little-used law to destroy his former friend and minister. Three separate Statutes of Praemunire had been passed between 1353 and 1391, barring legal communication with Rome on ecclesiastical cases involving English subjects. Henry invoked them to charge his archbishop, who was carrying out the king's own business, with illegally transferring an English case from the English church courts to the Vatican. It was a precedent Henry would turn to again in his long journey to rid himself of Catherine, who had refused the pope's pleas to retire to a convent and thereby free Henry to marry again. Henry knew even constant intimidation would be insufficient to change Catherine's mind, so he turned next to Parliament and began the train of events that would lead to the formal break with the Roman church.

Henry turned for help in managing Parliament primarily to Thomas Cromwell, who filled Wolsey's shoes as prime councilor or minister. Cromwell, schooled in law and an MP by 1529 and member of the king's privy council by 1530, approached the problem of Henry's marital woes with the idea that any reforms necessary to achieve a divorce and remarriage should be placed on such a footing that no future politicians, nobility, or churchmen could possibly undo them. Such reforms would have to be hardy, practical, and conservative enough to satisfy Henry's own innate religious conservatism and yet sufficiently far-reaching that the Church in Rome would acknowledge—peacefully if possible—a shift in power. Cromwell began his work in the atmosphere of widespread anticlericalism that had begun two centuries earlier, in the aftermath of the Black Death. The 1528 pamphlet by Simon Fish called *Supplication for the Beggars*, for example, was typical in criticizing the church for the immorality of its clergy, the corruption of its ecclesiastical structures, and the very practical problems of nonresidency and pluralism, which resulted in a large number of parishes without an active priest. Fish's pamphlet, like other anticlerical works, was read eagerly by the growing number of Lutherans who were living relatively hidden lives in London and Cambridge but who were eager for public discussions of both theological and ecclesiastical reform. Even staunch Catholics—at this point, of course, still by far the majority of the English—began to feel that reform from within was both necessary and preferable to reform from without.

The Parliament called in 1529 and convened in 1530—the Reformation Parliament—held the express mandate of reforming the church from within. Henry wanted to pressure the pope into annulling his marriage—highly preferable to a divorce and soothing to Henry's troubled conscience. Cromwell wanted the opportunity to reform and refresh the administration of the English church so that Rome got a clear message of noninterference. These were structural, not theological, reforms; Henry, named Defender of the Faith by the pope in 1521, was appalled by the heresies of Lutheranism. Thus, the measures passed by the Reformation Parliament focused on ecclesiastical abuses—forbidding plural holdings and nonresidencies, limiting the fees that could be charged for burials and wills, imposing strict standards on the church court judges known as *ordinaries*, and, in general, cleaning house from the inside.

Henry also summoned Convocation, the formal parliament of archbishops, bishops, and high-ranking clergy, to acknowledge the king's own and superior jurisdiction over the church in England and Wales. Dangling the example of Cardinal Wolsey before them, he told

his clergy that they had clearly violated the Statutes of Praemunire by communicating with Rome on matters of English church courts. They would be outlawed and further punished unless they purchased a royal pardon for some £120,000 and formally acknowledged that Henry was the church's "singular protector, only and supreme lord, and as far as the law of Christ allows, even supreme head." They agreed and received a formal pardon from Parliament in 1531. At the same time, guided by Cromwell, Parliament passed a series of acts placing certain church monies under the Crown's control and removing all English church court cases from Rome's jurisdiction. This latter act cleared the way to hear Henry's petition for annulment in England, denying Catherine the right of appeal to Rome. Henry's new archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer, moved rapidly to declare that Henry's marriage to Catherine had never been valid and that he was free to marry Anne. Since Anne had finally succumbed to Henry's demands and was expecting a child that Henry was sure would be a son, this annulment came in the nick of time. Anne was crowned queen on June 1, 1533, and gave birth three months later to a daughter, Elizabeth.

Furious that all of this work had been undertaken for a girl, Henry—who had been excommunicated by the pope for the annulment decree—now declared that the pope was merely the "bishop of Rome." In 1534 Parliament passed the Act of Supremacy, according to which "the King's Majesty justly and rightfully is the supreme head of the Church of England." A further act named all children of the marriage with Anne Boleyn as legal heirs to the throne, formally bypassing the now illegitimate Mary.

In 1536, at Henry's behest, Parliament passed an act requiring all clergy and government officials to formally approve of the break with Rome and the declaration of royal supremacy. Henry wished to gain open approval of men like Sir Thomas More, who had replaced Wolsey as Lord Chancellor, but his act had the opposite effect. More and others who refused to swear were imprisoned, tried, and executed, and Henry responded to those forced losses with a renewed fervor for more radical demonstrations of his power. Monastic houses were forced to acknowledge Henry's supremacy and then were dissolved, with their extensive landholdings—nearly 25 percent of all land in England—transferred to the Crown. The confiscation of monastic property prompted several uprisings, especially in the north where the so-called Pilgrimage of Grace encompassed five separate protests in 1536–1537, but these were efficiently and brutally put down. Cromwell was the practical author of the parliamentary acts effecting this



King Henry VIII, shown here with Anne Boleyn and, hidden from the king's view, Thomas Wolsey, was driven by his desire for a male heir to break with the Roman Catholic Church. Anne refused to become his mistress, and when Pope Clement VII refused Henry's request to divorce his first wife, Henry established himself as the head of the Church of England, annulled his first marriage, wed Anne, and began the long process of the English Reformation. (Library of Congress)

huge land transfer, and he hoped thereby to provide a large and permanent source of income to his free-handed king; but within a few years these lands would almost all be given away or sold off to satisfy debts and to pay for continued military expenditures on the continent. The beneficiaries would include the lesser gentry, who bought up land with great enthusiasm to increase their own social power in the countryside.

The dissolution itself demonstrated clearly that the Henrician church would not be cowed by fears of papal revenge. However, further than this Henry was unwilling to go. He wanted a full acknowledgment of his powers over church structure but was reluctant to use that power over church doctrine. Henry's theological changes were relatively minor—the Ten Articles of 1536 reduced the number of sacraments from seven to three, eliminated the tradition of praying for souls in purgatory, and introduced other limited reforms—and he resisted any further shift to Protestant doctrine. What he wanted, and what he got,

was a power structure under his own command. Changes in theology and in tradition were largely deferred to the reigns of his children.

As for the woman who acted as catalyst to this ecclesiastical shift, she was soon gone. Anne, who miscarried a boy, was accused of sorcery, incest, and bestiality and executed in 1536, the same year that Catherine of Aragon finally died of old age and grief. Henry's third wife, Jane Seymour, dutifully bore a son and died shortly thereafter, in 1537; three more wives—Anne of Cleves, Catherine Howard, and Catherine Parr—produced no more children. None of these women swayed him from an increasingly conservative theology. Henry himself remained emotionally tied to the habits of his Catholic faith, welcoming the renewal of his title as Defender of the Faith by the independent English church in 1544. It would be the actions of his heirs—first Edward, then Mary, then Elizabeth—to make any significant changes in the doctrines and ceremonies of his independent church.

EDWARD VI AND THE REGENCY

Henry's nine-year-old son succeeded him in 1547 as Edward VI (1547–1553), the first king in 60 years to be crowned as a minor. His maternal uncles, led by Lord Protector Edward Seymour, Duke of Somerset, formed the heart of his Council of Regency. Somerset, himself influenced by the growing presence in England of Lutherans and then Calvinists, encouraged his nephew to introduce theological reforms that were gradualist but also unequivocally "Protestant." Somerset was supported in this gradualist approach by Cranmer, who remained archbishop of Canterbury under Edward and who was determined to make sure that the ecclesiastical reforms instituted under Henry would be cemented so firmly into place that any return to Rome would be practically impossible.

These reforms included a new prayer book in 1549, the dissolution of the private chapels or chantries of the wealthy, and the welcoming of Protestant refugees from the continent, but Somerset and Cranmer resisted pressures to implement harsh heresy laws and to actively root out Roman Catholicism. John Dudley, the Earl of Warwick (and later Duke of Northumberland) ousted Somerset in 1549, rejecting his gradualism and instead guiding Edward into "hot Protestantism." The period between 1549 and 1553 was characterized by the rapid introduction of radical theological reforms, a process approved by Cranmer, who remained as archbishop. Changes included the banishment of Catholics, new requirements for a preaching clergy, and the strict implementation of the 1549 prayer book. An even more radically

Calvinist prayer book was introduced in 1552, and this prayer book made it impossible to intellectually reconcile the new church with the old theology, especially over the matter of the Eucharist: did the sacrament involve a miraculous change in bread and wine, as Catholicism and Lutheranism maintained, or was it instead a nonmiraculous commemoration of Christ's sacrifice, as Calvin taught? Religious tensions erupted in a series of attacks on churches by the hotter Protestants, who destroyed stained glass windows, looted plate and tapestries, and generally tried to eradicate all physical evidence of "popery." Edward's government decried the violence but approved the motives and tended to look the other way.

As troubling as theological tensions were a series of popular riots and rebellions sparked by the ongoing shift to agricultural capitalism. The gradual rationalization of large-scale landownership, begun in the wake of the Black Death, is often known simply as the "enclosure movement," but it encompassed a much broader set of reforms than merely hedging or enclosing fields. Crop rotation, new technologies of plowing and fertilization, consolidation of tenant farms ("engrossment"), and the reclamation of wastelands traditionally used by peasants for forage and fuel all increased land productivity and profitability, but they often squeezed small tenant farmers into landlessness in the process and almost universally pushed the already-landless laborer into destitution. Even more damaging was the conversion of cropland into sheep pasture; whole villages could be swallowed up overnight by these conversions, as large numbers of farm laborers were replaced by single shepherds tending flocks of extremely profitable sheep. Sir Thomas More had lamented the incursion of what he called these "man-eating sheep" in his 1516 *Utopia*, although he himself was hauled into court on charges of illegal enclosure under Thomas Wolsey's administration. Laws had been passed in 1489 and in 1514 limiting the ability of landlords to convert arable land into sheep pasture, but this had not stopped the process, and by Edward's reign there were continual protests against both sheep farming and the widespread practices of engrossment and enclosure. One particularly serious uprising in the north—Ket's Rebellion of 1549—had provided the impetus for Somerset's ouster.

In the end, fate was unkind to Edward and his reforms. He died in 1553, before the innovations in theology had time to be fully absorbed outside London, Cambridge, and a handful of other urban areas. In the countryside, most people remained emotionally attached to the Catholic Church, willing to accept the ecclesiastical innovations of Henry's reign but dismayed and appalled at the theological reforms

introduced by his son. And at Edward's death, the religious fate of England seemed up in the air.

So also did the succession. Henry had stipulated that Edward would inherit, followed by Mary and then Elizabeth, both of whom he had declared illegitimate and then, reconciled to the inevitable in his old age, had once again legitimized. Warwick, now the Duke of Northumberland, scrambled to preserve "his" religious changes as Edward lay dying, persuading Edward to circumvent the royal succession and name his cousin, Jane Grey, as the heir in place of Mary Tudor. Jane was Northumberland's 15-year-old daughter-in-law and an unwilling participant, but Edward's fondness for her was as genuine as his desire to protect his church from Mary's Catholicism. However, Jane (1553) reigned only nine days. Mary and her supporters rapidly rallied the countryside, appealing to those whose fears of a civil war outweighed their suspicions of Mary's plans for the English church, and were able to remove both Jane and her father-in-law from power. Mary took the throne in triumph, determined to restore her kingdom to the true faith.

MARY I

Mary I (1553–1558) had been shaped by neglect and persecution that rendered her single-minded in her determination to return England and Wales to Rome. Initially, however, she exercised lenience. Northumberland was executed and Jane was imprisoned, to be executed the following year. Cranmer was replaced as archbishop of Canterbury by Reginald Pole, while Bishop Stephen Gardiner became Lord Chancellor. The three of them together—Mary, Gardiner, and Pole—began to engineer the return to Rome, a move that like the initial break would need to be cemented into place through various acts of Parliament. The first step was the 1553 Statute of Repeal, which at one stroke turned the church clock back to the time of Henry VIII. Once again the English church was liturgically and theologically Catholic but independent from the direct control of Rome.

Any attempt to reinstate the old ecclesiastical forms of the church would be very difficult: Parliament was full of men who had benefited most materially from the dissolution of the monasteries, and many of them were also Protestant. All of them viewed a renewal of close papal relations with suspicion. Mary initially avoided violence, encouraging some 800 English Protestants to leave the country, guaranteeing the Henrician land transfers, and directing the penitential plea for reconciliation with Rome that was read before a joint session of both houses of Parliament. In 1555 she revived the heresy laws and began

to persecute Protestants in the wave of burnings that earned her the nickname “Bloody Mary.” These so-called Smithfield Fires primarily targeted socially and economically vulnerable men and women rather than persons of power; her few high-level victims included Cranmer, who had initially recanted and then took back his recantation, thrusting first into the fire the hand with which he had signed his original confession of error. Mary had calculated that the limited spread of hot Protestantism would make it easy to move back to Rome, but the Smithfield Fires, more than anything else, turned England into a Protestant nation. These public executions, carried out inefficiently and with tremendous suffering, turned their victims into martyrs, who would be enshrined by the Protestant divine John Foxe in his famous *Acts and Monuments of the Church*, a book that would eventually be chained to every cathedral pulpit under the Protestant Elizabeth.

Mary’s program of reconciliation with the church included her 1555 marriage to her cousin Philip of Spain, son of Holy Roman Emperor Charles V. A reluctant and suspicious Parliament insisted that Philip be denied any powers of appointment in his new kingdom and that all offices in the English government and church be filled by Englishmen. Even these strictures were almost not enough; a revolt nearly derailed the Spanish marriage and led to a spate of executions, even placing the princess Elizabeth under suspicion of treason. The marriage itself was unsuccessful. Philip spent most of his time away from England, and Mary’s failure to conceive a child filled her with grief. In 1557 Philip involved England in a war between Spain and France, during which France reclaimed the last English outpost on the continent, the city of Calais, symbol of former glory. This humiliation was compounded by actions by the Vatican: during the course of the war, the new pope excommunicated Philip and declared Reginald Pole a heretic. Spain, still commanding English assistance, invaded Rome. Mary, a devout Catholic whose only wish was to return her kingdom to the embrace of the true church, found herself at the age of 41 ill and barren, wed to an excommunicant who did not love her, with a declared heretic as her spiritual advisor, in a war against her Holy Father, and facing the hard truth that her successor had only outwardly conformed to the Catholic faith. Her death in 1558 ended a reign short in days but interminable to many of her subjects. On November 17, the crown passed to her sister Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH I AND THE RELIGIOUS SETTLEMENT

Elizabeth I (1558–1603) took the throne determined to pursue a moderate course in religion. She sought a modified version of the

church of her father: moderately Catholic in ritual and tradition but Protestant in its rejection of papal influence and flexible enough to accommodate the hotter Protestants who were returning from the continent after years among the Calvinists. Her famous “middle way,” her *via media*, would be a state church that was under the direction of the Crown: no independent congregations along the Calvinist lines, no dispensing with bishops and other offices, but no loyalties to the pope nor any other foreign authority. She wanted outward conformity with a church structure that upheld and supported the Crown and its authority, but so long as her subjects attended a church recognized as an arm of the state, and so long as certain basic liturgical forms were followed, she was content to allow flexibility in many of the details of observance.

This religious settlement was codified in the 1558 Acts of Supremacy and Uniformity, defining England as a kingdom under one church, with that church under the leadership of one Crown. The 1552 prayer book was reinstated, vestments were required, church attendance was mandated on Sundays and Holy Days, and the language of the Eucharist was deliberately reworked to accommodate both the miraculous and commemorative interpretations of communion. These and other more minor changes were too papist for the hotter Protestants, now known as the Puritans, and not nearly papist enough for the Catholics, but Elizabeth was determined to carve out a compromise that would allow as many of her subjects as possible to participate comfortably in mandatory religious observance.

The Act of Supremacy required all clergy to take an oath of allegiance to the Crown; all but about 300 parish priests complied, but Elizabeth was forced to replace all of her bishops. However, taking a lesson from Mary’s missteps, she did not persecute lay Catholics except to levy the considerable fine of a shilling a day for nonattendance. Within a few months, as she and her advisors—including her first minister, William Cecil, who was an integral part of Elizabeth’s administration for nearly five decades—had calculated, most English Catholics had settled into a pattern of general attendance except on communion Sundays, paying fines about once a month while preserving their consciences. With no priests to administer the sacraments, many Catholics gradually transferred their allegiance to the Church of England, whose rituals and traditions were so similar to those of Rome. Initially, Elizabeth’s more Protestant subjects, especially Puritans returning from the continent, found the *via media* so accommodating as to verge on heresy. But political reality, and the careful appointment of Puritans to positions of power within the state, helped persuade most of them to accept

the Elizabethan church. The Act of Uniformity established a system that allowed individual congregations a certain amount of leeway in the general temperature of their services. On the one hand, vestments might be popish, but on the other hand, the Calvinist emphasis on a preaching ministry could be satisfied in congregations who wanted to invite visiting divines to speak. It was clear to returning Puritans that Elizabeth was not going to jeopardize her church to satisfy either extreme of Calvinist or Catholic, and most Protestants eventually and grudgingly acquiesced.

Thus, for a decade, Elizabeth's *via media* allowed for relative peace and stability. By the end of the 1560s, however, a revitalized Roman Catholic Church had two new weapons against the heresies of the Protestants. The Jesuits, a rapidly growing evangelical force on the continent, eventually crossed the English Channel, and a new Catholic college at Douai, in the Spanish Netherlands, was established to train priests specifically for England. Between 1568 and 1585, approximately 300 newly trained priests crossed surreptitiously into England to take up their responsibilities to the country's Catholics, many of whom found renewed meaning in their faith once priests were available to administer sacraments and guidance. This influx of priests led to a rapid uptick in persecution and renewed strife with Rome; the pope excommunicated Elizabeth in 1570, and she responded the following year by making it a treasonable offense for Jesuits and Douai seminarians to be in England. Such traitors were sentenced to being hanged, drawn, and quartered, a punishment reserved for the most serious of high treasons.

THREATS TO THE ENGLISH THRONE: FRANCE, SCOTLAND, SPAIN, AND IRELAND

Elizabeth's religious settlement was also threatened by the political intrigues that swirled around her Catholic cousin Mary, Queen of Scots (1542–1566; died 1587). Mary, who became queen as an infant after the death of her father, also had strong blood ties to the English throne through her paternal grandmother, Margaret Tudor (sister of Henry VIII), who had married James IV (1488–1513) of Scotland. James was killed by English forces at Flodden Field, leaving the throne to his infant son, James V (1513–1542). This James was half English, but the actions of the English armies pushed the Scottish government more fully into the arms of the French. In 1542 relations further soured when the Duke of Norfolk invaded Scotland, killing James V and some 10,000 Scots troops at Solway Moss and leaving James's only

child Mary as ruler under the regency of her French mother, Mary of Guise. Henry VIII's Treaty of Greenwich proposed the formal union of the two Crowns through the marriage of his son Edward to the infant Mary Stewart (or Stuart, as the name was spelled by the English), but the Scots were never willing partners in the treaty and the betrothal was never formalized; Mary would be betrothed to Francis, crown prince of France, in 1548. Further depredations at the hands of the English in 1545, including the sack of Edinburgh, intensified the Scottish hatred of the English.

At the same time that England's actions appeared to move Scotland politically closer to the France of the Queen Regent, the Scottish Reformation provided a rallying point for the many who found de facto French rule abhorrent. Protestants within Scotland increasingly linked religious reformation with political independence from France and looked to coreligionists, even those in hated England, for support. In 1557 the Protestant nobility pledged themselves to establish a Protestant Scotland, a move that gained strength with the return of Protestant divine John Knox from exile. The 1559 accession of Francis II and Mary, who had married in 1558, and a potential formal union of Scotland and France, compelled the Protestant nobles and their supporters to appeal to England and Elizabeth for active help. The battles that ensued after English troops crossed the northern border were ended by the death of Mary of Guise and the 1560 Treaty of Edinburgh, which expelled both French and English troops from Scotland. At the same time, the Scottish parliament voted to formally adopt Calvinist Protestantism—or Presbyterianism, as it would become known—as the state religion. Late that year, Mary returned to Scotland a 17-year-old widow and was compelled by Parliament to swear to preserve the new Presbyterian kirk.

In 1565 Mary—Queen of Scotland in her own right since her mother's death in 1560, and now also heir apparent to the English throne—married for the second time. Her choice was her cousin Henry Stewart, the Earl of Darnley, who shortly afterward murdered the man he suspected of being Mary's lover. In 1566, after the birth of their only child, Darnley himself was murdered by James Hepburn, the Earl of Bothwell, who then eloped with the new widow. Mary was forced to abdicate the Scottish throne in favor of her infant son, who became James VI of Scotland and was raised in the Protestant Church of Scotland despite a lavish ceremony baptizing him in the Catholic faith. (James would, however, continue to resist the structures of Presbyterianism, as we will see in the next chapter.) Mary continued to claim that her

rights had been illegally taken from her, and after a failed attempt to reclaim her throne she fled to England in 1568 to seek refuge with her cousin.

Elizabeth was an unwilling hostess. Mary was young, marriageable, and Catholic, a magnet for high-ranking English Catholics who saw her as the natural focus of any attempts to return the English church back to Rome. Elizabeth was well aware of the lightning rod Mary represented for Catholic plotters, aided largely by Spain and Rome, but she also believed her cousin had been forced against her will to give up her crown. For years she balanced her own belief in divine right kingship, which underscored her tepid support for Mary's claims to her Scottish throne, against the reports of William Cecil's extensive spy network (which covered the continent and was rumored to include such figures as Sir Walter Raleigh and playwright Christopher Marlowe). Only after a series of foiled plots between 1569 and 1586 did Elizabeth finally acknowledge that Mary's continued existence would always endanger the English Crown. Mary was beheaded in 1587 after the fourth and final of these intrigues, which like earlier conspiracies had involved Spanish and papal efforts to place her on the English throne in place of her cousin.

Without Mary as a rallying point, Spanish attempts to subdue England took another turn. Philip II, Mary I's widower and thus Elizabeth's former brother-in-law, began openly to build up his naval fleet, setting ships into place along the English Channel and preparing for invasion. The actual launch took place in May 1588, when a mass of large and cumbersome Spanish ships—well equipped and loaded with armaments—began to sail up the Channel. To the surprise of both Spanish and English, however, and with the help of the weather, the smaller and lighter English ships were able to force the Spanish Armada to retreat. The medals struck in honor of the victory read, "God blew, and they were scattered," and all across the country and well onto the continent Protestants took the victory as a sign that their faith was the true faith.

This defeat was not the end of Philip's attempts to subdue Elizabeth. Spain's subsequent efforts to wage war against England focused heavily on the conquest of Ireland as a natural portal to Elizabeth's realm, persuading Elizabeth in turn to pour money and men into a renewed attempt to establish English control over her Catholic neighbor. Her father Henry had lost his traditional title of Lord of Ireland—a title conferred originally by the pope—when he broke with Rome, and had reacted with violence, ultimately forcing the passage of the

Crown of Ireland Act in 1542, which created the kingship for Henry and his heirs. The pope, however, refused to recognize this change in jurisdiction, continuing to treat Ireland as a papal territory until a 1555 papal bull ceded most authority to the Catholic Mary and Philip. Ireland's status remained uniquely ambiguous, with a subsequent papal bull rejecting Elizabeth's authority and most Irish chiefs ignoring all of this high-level posturing. But Ireland provided a dangerous staging ground for Spanish invaders, and the fears of Spain prompted a violent reconquest of Ireland, which was completed only in 1603. Attempts to impose Protestant culture on a Catholic and in many ways very foreign country were universally a failure.

The war with Spain—no matter where that war was fought—was a significant burden for England, in part because England lacked the money and men that Spain could command. Elizabeth was forced to conclude treaties with various Protestant forces on the continent as war engulfed much of Western Europe, treaties that cost the Crown over £1 million in the six years after the Armada. These costs were met by heavy borrowing and serious depletion of the royal coffers rather than any significant reworking of the tax rolls. The income from taxes had become increasingly insufficient as unprecedented centuries-long inflation proceeded apace and tax rates themselves remained stagnant. Elizabeth preferred to turn a blind eye to her wealthier tax evaders, even as local tax levels increased in order to cover rising military expenditures. At the same time, Elizabeth looked with favor on those like Sir Francis Drake, who could bring her gifts of gold and silver gained through privateering and outright piracy, especially at the expense of Spain. Many of the voyages to North America that marked Elizabeth's reign were the result of private investment undertaken with royal favor, as was the case with Drake's expedition to the coast of the Americas and Sir Walter Raleigh's attempts to establish permanent settlements in the new colony of Virginia. Disaster often ensued owing to lack of Crown funding, exacerbated by the need to keep the English fleet as close to home and to Spain as possible. More successful was the gradual expansion of English trade throughout the Mediterranean and Eastern Europe, as well as the establishment in 1600 of the East India Company with the goal of displacing the Dutch as the prime players in the spice trade.

AFTER THE ARMADA: RELIGION AND POLITICS

The defeat of the Armada, because it appeared to signal divine sanction of a Protestant nation, had important repercussions both in the

popular imagination and within Elizabeth's government. Her relations with her Puritan MPs had grown increasingly strained as they called for Mary's execution and new punitive measures against all of the kingdom's Catholics. But many Puritans had actually been disgruntled for years, for although they accepted as a practical compromise Elizabeth's *via media*, they had never stopped seeking ways in which to warm up the less Calvinist aspects of the state church. Among their concerns were such extra-biblical traditions as the use of wedding rings and the mandatory vestments of the clergy; the infrequent mentions of predestination within the prayer book; and the church's structure of archbishops and bishops, which robbed individual congregations of autonomy.

Elizabeth relied on her archbishop of Canterbury, John Whitgift, to break the back of what she saw as a radical Puritan movement that threatened the very stability of the church she had worked so hard to establish. Whitgift cleaned up a number of internal abuses that had angered many besides the most radical of the Puritans but also reiterated that the state church was founded equally on the prayer book and the episcopal structure of bishoprics and parishes. Conflict between Puritan MPs and the Crown continued until the defeat of the Armada, which ironically served to diminish the Puritan voice within Parliament because it seemed to show that God had smiled on Elizabeth's "middle way" rather than smiting those with moderate views. Puritans thereafter slowly began to reorient themselves as voices of social and moral change rather than agitators for political and ecclesiastical change.

This shift did not mean Elizabeth's government ran without opposition. Her reign was marked by increasingly vocal parliaments that had gained confidence through a confluence of factors. First, Henry's break with Rome had occurred through the careful use of parliamentary legislation, giving MPs in the House of Commons a strong sense that they were true if still unequal partners with the Crown. Second, as a group the MPs of the 1500s were highly educated, much more so than their predecessors. Many of them were well versed in the complexities of English law in a way that was new to the character of the House of Commons. Third, most members of the House of Commons, while still dependent on good relations with their local nobles, were much less tightly bound economically and politically to the old aristocracy; this relative independence was translated into assertive debates within the chambers of Parliament. Fourth, a growing number of Puritan MPs translated their general anticlericalism into a broader skepticism about authoritarianism generally. Elizabeth was correct

in assuming that those who attacked the episcopal structure of the English church were implicitly attacking the royal supremacy and thus the full range of Crown authority. And finally, a deeply rooted period of inflation, economic depression, and pressures from local constituents persuaded many MPs to discuss, if not to reform, all manner of Crown economic policies.

These factors were not enough to encourage any kind of revolt or even organized opposition among MPs, but Elizabeth's parliaments were increasingly vocal about the rights and privileges they enjoyed within the chambers of the House. The House of Commons persisted in discussing matters that the queen felt were her prerogative alone, including the vexed question of her marriage, the royal succession, the royal supremacy of the church, foreign policy, and trade. Over the years the House of Commons established its right to debate these issues even while conceding that it had no power to directly influence them. Elizabeth herself continued to brook no interference in her refusal to wed or in her leadership of the church, and contented herself generally with managing her ministers through courtship, concessions, and oppression. One historian has compared her handling of her privy council, in particular, to that of a nanny managing her recalcitrant charges. Such a style depended on a forceful and engaging personality, and Elizabeth inadvertently set the stage for some very difficult times for her less charismatic successor by relying so heavily on personal relationships with MPs, courtiers, and councilors. When Elizabeth died in 1603, that successor was James VI of Scotland, the son of her cousin Mary, Queen of Scots. Elizabeth had resisted almost to the last naming James as her heir but finally agreed to the inevitable.

5

Stuart Britain, the Republic, and Restoration

THE EARLY STUARTS

James VI of Scotland became James I of England and Ireland at the age of 35, having ruled Scotland since his infancy. Initially, weary of the aged Elizabeth's tempers and foibles, the English welcomed their new king, but personal and political conflicts soon developed. James was shy, awkward, and fond of lecturing his ministers and subjects. His early years as king of Scotland had been marked by struggles to wrest control from regents and personal enemies, surviving at least one assassination attempt and a period of imprisonment in Ruthven Castle in 1552. His later rule included sustained efforts to "civilize" the Highlands as well as the Hebrides, Shetland, and Orkney Islands, where the crown's power was relatively weak.

These experiences led to a rather heavy-handed approach to his new English throne: James dismissed any idea of a partnership with Parliament in favor of his own well-articulated theories of divine right kingship. His appointment of Scots to positions of power and influence alienated many Englishmen, and his open and ardent—although

ultimately unsuccessful—pursuit of a formal union of the two countries, which would include a common church and a common parliament, alarmed observers on both sides of the border. Certain personal traits, including his sexual preferences, further alienated many of his courtiers, and his tendency to elevate beautiful young men as his personal favorites, showering them with positions of wealth and power no matter what their antecedents or abilities, provided a continuous source of friction between king and subjects.

Within the first year of his kingship, James had so alarmed his Parliament that the House of Commons drafted a document, the Form of Apology and Satisfaction, reiterating the important responsibilities and privileges enjoyed by this partner of the Crown. Although the document remained formally undelivered to the king, James certainly understood it as an early indication of the Commons' sense that the monarch lacked appropriate respect for the skills and duties of Parliament. Thus, the issue of power that would eventually lead to outright civil war began to emerge before the new reign was a year old.

James consistently sought and used occasions to reinforce the powers of the Royal Prerogative in matters of trade, religion, and foreign policy—all of which Parliament itself increasingly claimed as matters for negotiation and discussion, issuing several formal protests attempting to force the Crown to recognize the rights of elected representatives to help shape policy. James also used his powers of patronage to enrich the Crown, selling the newly created honor of baronet to commoners eager to buy their way onto the lowest rung of the noble ladder. After James put much of the control of royal patronage into the hands of his favorite, George Villiers, the Duke of Buckingham, other titles—including peerages that carried membership in the House of Lords—were also placed on the market. The number of peers rose from 60 to 160 between 1540 and 1640, while the number of baronets and knights nearly tripled during that same period. While this put money in the depleted royal coffers, it also angered many members of the established aristocracy and taught them to regard the new king as antagonistic to the blood and honor of the traditional elite.

James's reign was also marked by ongoing religious tensions. In 1605 the Gunpowder Plot, a Catholic attempt to blow up the houses of Parliament under the leadership of Guy Fawkes, led to increased measures against Catholics who would not take the oath of allegiance that repudiated the pope's authority over the king. James's own understanding of the relationship between church and state—epitomized in his statement, “no bishops, no king”—rested on a hierarchical structure that rejected both the bottom-up alternative of Scots

Presbyterianism and the even more radical new forms of Puritan Congregationalism that appeared to completely reject a state church. For James, the episcopal structures of the Anglican Church were an indispensable adjunct to his rulership of a healthy Christian realm, and his commitment to his duties in this regard were manifested in the production of the King James Bible, on the one hand, and the brutal persecution of witchcraft in Scotland, on the other. His attempts to reestablish a strong episcopacy in Scotland, however, were a failure.

Despite these constant tensions, James ruled a stable collection of kingdoms. The brutal suppression of the Irish under Elizabeth I, in the very costly Nine Years' War, came to a formal end as James ascended, and his generous terms to the Irish chieftains helped secure peace. Those Irish earls who refused to accept the settlement fled to the continent, losing their lands in the process; beginning in 1608, these confiscated lands were granted to Protestant Scots and English settlers in the decade-long Plantation of Ulster. Native Irish were barred from most privileges of landowning and resented the suppression of Gaelic culture, but relative stability was maintained.

At the same time, other settlers from Scotland and England chose to relocate to new settlements in the Virginia and New England colonies, options particularly attractive to Puritans dissatisfied with the Anglican compromises of Elizabeth. Rounding out this expansionism, the East India Company (founded 1600) launched a series of voyages to the Spice Islands, where merchants and traders initially struggled to compete with the Dutch and Portuguese, and then turned instead to the establishment of a presence on the Indian subcontinent. Most of these efforts, including the Plantation of Ulster, were funded through joint stock companies and private investment groups, seeking only formal recognition from a crown too impoverished to actually pay for an increased British presence beyond the kingdom's borders.

When James died in 1625 the crown passed to his younger son, Charles, who like Henry VIII had not been groomed to be king but had become the heir after the early death of his older brother. Charles I (1625–1649) shared with his father a dedication to the arts—he continued James's important and broad patronage of theater and the visual arts—and a religious orientation in opposition to the strict predestinarian theology of the Puritans. He also shared his father's complete and unshakeable belief in divine right kingship and joined with this belief several unfortunate character traits, including a profound level of untrustworthiness. Even his wife, the French Catholic princess Henrietta Maria, admitted that her beloved husband was an inveterate liar.

This fundamental flaw made relations between king and Parliament much more tense than had been the case with the first Stuart. With James I, Parliament's hands were relatively tied because James had been voted a life income at his succession and was theoretically free of money woes unless special circumstances arose, such as war, that required additional expenditures approved by Parliament. Because the Royal Prerogative covered trade, James could and did manipulate such things as excise taxes to supplement his treasury without having to go through Parliament. When Charles came to power, however, Parliament refused to follow normal practice and instead voted the king only an annual income that would have to be renewed, forcing Charles—at least in theory—to use his parliaments as true partners. Charles was enraged; and, far from bowing to this pressure, he began to look for ways to stretch the power of the prerogative to avoid what he felt was deliberate humiliation. But his early reign was marked by two wars, one with Spain (1625–1629) and another with France (1627–1629), and the money required for armies and armaments forced him to ask for extra money bills to be passed.

In 1628 Parliament took the unusual step of presenting Charles with the Petition of Right, which sought to limit the powers of the prerogative, especially in regard to extra-parliamentary taxation such as excise duties, and to guarantee civil liberties at all times, including during times of war. Since England was still embroiled in the French and Spanish wars, this was a direct attack on Charles's actions. Charles signed the petition under duress, hoping that his acquiescence here would move Parliament to vote the extra taxes that he needed to continue his wars on the continent.

But Parliament refused to do so until Charles had agreed to certain changes in the church, in particular a move away from a number of ceremonial aspects that had been introduced by Charles's archbishop, William Laud, in order to increase popular reverence for the clergy. Many Puritan MPs were also deeply troubled by Laud's Arminianism, a theological position that diluted the cornerstone of Calvinism by effectively substituting free will for predestination and reducing the Puritan emphasis on the utter and innate sinfulness of humankind.

Charles in his fury dissolved the House of Commons, whose members in their own fury refused to disband until they had passed resolutions regarding the church and certain financial matters. Charles was within his rights to do this; the House was absolutely out of bounds to continue to meet after being dissolved by the Crown; and this impasse was indicative of the growing hostility between king and Parliament.

THE PERSONAL RULE AND CIVIL WAR

Charles vowed to rule without Parliament and did so for the 11 years known as the Personal Rule. In 1640, under pressure of another war, he finally reconvened this very same Parliament, with men who had been fuming at home for over a decade. This does not mean that these MPs were already planning revolution, but they were generally incensed by the king's actions. Had not the two Henry Tudors emphasized the necessity of Parliament as a partner in government? Had not the complexities of religious settlements under the later Tudors required constant parliamentary action? How could this Stuart king simply ignore the precedents set during the previous 150 years? James I had contributed to this situation of sullen resentment inadvertently, because his sale of honors had allowed many members of the House of Commons to buy their way up into the House of Lords, leaving the Commons without older leaders who might be able to dampen the independent spirit of this generation of MPs.

At the same time, however, there was no recognizable parliamentary "opposition." Instead, there were loose groups of men within the House who felt strongly about any number of issues, including religion and the protection of "ancient liberties" that appeared to be under attack by an innovative king. They would claim that they were protecting and conserving tradition, even as Charles would claim that they themselves were the radical innovators, trying to gain new powers for the legislature.

Essentially, the tensions that would erupt into war came down to claims by each side that they were the conservers of ancient tradition, with Charles claiming primacy for the long history of the Royal Prerogative and his opponents arguing just as vehemently that the Personal Rule deliberately trampled over the rights and liberties of the freeborn Englishman that had been enshrined in the Magna Carta. These rights and liberties appeared to be under direct attack through the king's use of the prerogative courts (such as the Court of Star Chamber, which under Charles became a hated symbol of autocratic rule), the creative expansion of prerogative taxation (including ship money, which had traditionally required coastal counties to help defray the cost of their own naval protection but which Charles levied on inland counties as well), and a continued emphasis within the English church on a strong priesthood organized through an episcopal structure that bound church and state tightly together.

Charles would undoubtedly have continued to rule without Parliament except that arguments over religion eventually sparked a

war within his kingdoms. In 1636, Charles ordered the introduction of a new prayer book into Scotland to replace the Calvinist Book of Discipline, doing so via royal proclamation to bypass the inevitable protest of both the Kirk and the General Assembly. In this, however, he gravely miscalculated; the imposition of this prayer book further alarmed many Scots, who already worried that the informal personal union of the two kingdoms would soon be replaced by formal ties that would subjugate Scotland to full English rule and the Scottish Calvinist church to an episcopal and theologically Anglican institution.

In response, the Scots drafted a document called the National Covenant, which outlined Scottish opposition to Charles's policies. The Covenant went on a tour of the country before it was presented to Charles in 1638, with signatures from vast numbers of nobles and commoners, Presbyterian and Episcopalian alike. Charles suspended the mandatory use of the prayer book but at the same time sent a small and ill-equipped army north to suppress dissent and to defeat the Covenanters, who had taken control of the Scottish parliament.

The result was the First Bishops' War of 1639, a minor skirmish with the Scots as winners that set the stage for what was to come. Charles called his close advisor, Thomas Wentworth, the Earl of Strafford, back from his administrative duties in Ireland in order to oversee the deployment of a new army. At the same time, he called on both the English and the Irish parliaments to vote funds for a war against Scotland. The Irish parliament voted to raise the money; the English parliament, made up of men who had cooled their heels for nearly a dozen years, did not.

Instead, the English MPs prepared a list of grievances to present to Charles before they would even consider voting money for a war against another part of the kingdom. Charles in his turn dissolved Parliament—the so-called Short Parliament—a mere three weeks after it had been called and sent another army north. The Second Bishops' War ended, like the first, with defeat at the hands of the Scots. The terms of this truce left Scots troops quartered in the north of England, and to pay for this expensive billeting, Charles once again called his MPs to Westminster, convening what would be known as the Long Parliament because it would formally sit from 1640 through 1653.

No MP seriously considered any kind of direct attack on Charles himself in 1640, instead impeaching and attainting his "evil councilors," Laud and Strafford. So desperate were they that, in Strafford's case, they devised a theory of what was called "constructive treason," which held that all of Strafford's actions, taken together, constituted an offense "against the being of Law, and it is the law that unites the King

and his people, and the author of this treason hath endeavored to dissolve that union.”¹ Charles, who had pledged to protect his ministers, permitted Strafford’s execution in 1641, signaling to his aristocracy that he would not intervene to protect even his most loyal supporters. Laud was executed in 1645, after four years in the Tower of London.

Once it had rid the country of these men, the House of Commons under the leadership of John Pym moved quickly to dismantle many of the instruments of Charles’s personal rule. The prerogative courts were dissolved, extra-parliamentary taxes were ended, and laws were passed guaranteeing two protections: first, that Parliament could not be dissolved without its own consent, and second, that it would automatically be summoned every three years whether or not the Crown wished it to meet. Charles signed these and other acts that legally prevented the monarch from ever again ruling without Parliament. Yet despite these important concessions, and because of Charles’s demonstrable untrustworthiness, England found itself embroiled in civil war by 1642.

The spark to this war was the Irish Rebellion of 1641, another installment in what historians refer to as the Wars of the Three Kingdoms. Protests in Ireland against the Protestant Crown, calling for toleration for the Catholic faith and an end to the political and economic disabilities imposed on Irish Catholics, posed a new set of problems for the government. Protestant MPs in Westminster had little or no sympathy for the Irish Catholic resistance, viewing this uprising from a radically different perspective than that informing the Bishops’ Wars in Scotland. The rebels should be quashed. But—and here was the key—if Parliament sanctioned the funds for an English army to fight the Irish, what was to prevent the king from using this very army against the House of Commons?

Pym and his followers tried to get around this problem by drafting a Militia Bill that granted the money for an army but designated the appointment of army officers as a right of Parliament, not the Crown. This was the first time anyone had suggested that the defense of the realm should be taken away from the king and placed into the hands of the Commons. The narrow passage of the bill split Parliament into two recognizable camps. Pym’s faction became strongly identified with the rights of Parliament, not only the ancient rights recognized by Charles in his assent to recent acts but also new rights that gave Parliament the power of an equal in the government of the realm. The opposing faction argued that the Militia Bill robbed the Crown of its traditional powers of appointment, essentially turning the king into a figurehead.

These men, soon to rally as Royalists, did not defend Charles personally and, in fact, were as suspicious as Pym's Parliamentarians of Charles's motives and secret actions. But they saw this issue as a constitutional one and strongly asserted the rights of the monarch to conduct the kingdom's defense and to appoint his own ministers and advisors. They wanted Parliament and king to rule as equal partners; the Parliamentarians, according to this group, were seeking to eliminate the powers of the Crown altogether. The Parliamentarians themselves codified their concerns in a November 1641 document called the Grand Remonstrance, which not only rehearsed the grievances against the king but also proposed major reductions in the powers of the Crown. On August 22, 1642, Charles raised his royal standard in Nottingham, and civil war in England officially began.

The civil war was both political and religious and split the country in a variety of ways. In 1642, at the outbreak of war, Charles commanded the loyalty of about 70 percent of his aristocracy and a slight majority of the gentry. Within the House of Commons, the split was 316 in support of Pym and 226 opposed. A number of Royalists continued to mistrust the king but chose to oppose the Parliamentarians because they wanted to preserve the traditions of the Crown and the powers of a state church with its episcopal hierarchy. Most of the Parliamentarians, in contrast, were of an older generation than the Royalists, sharing a common experience of university education and legal training in the 1630s that had grounded them in theories of governance which emphasized the traditions of shared power between Crown and Parliament.

Parliamentarians also tended to identify themselves as Puritan, and many were receptive to proposals to replace the episcopacy with a Presbyterian or even an independent Congregationalist structure of religion. Among these Parliamentarians were Oliver Cromwell, who would soon emerge as the military commander of Parliament's New Model Army, and his son-in-law Henry Ireton. This correlation between Puritan and Parliament, on the one hand, and Anglican and Royalist, on the other, was loose and never complete, marked by shifting affiliations over the course of the wars; in Scotland, for example, lowland Covenanters tended to back the Parliamentarians, while many Highland clans remained loyal to the king. In Wales, support remained overwhelmingly Royalist.

At all times changes in both politics and religion were driven more by practical necessity than by pure ideological conviction. This was true from the very beginning, when the need for a military alliance between Parliamentarians and Scots Covenanters pushed even the

most reluctant and moderate Puritans to vote to dismantle the episcopal hierarchy. In 1643 Parliament passed the Solemn League and Covenant, a document that placated the Scots with its pledge to establish a new and “reformed” state church but also was deliberately vague in what that “reform” might be. Not until 1646, pushed again by necessity, was the episcopal structure of the English church formally destroyed and church property confiscated and sold to finance the ongoing war.

Instead of a Presbyterian system, however, in 1648 England adopted an Established Congregational Church as the official state religion but also guaranteed toleration for other forms of religious worship, including, for the first time since 1290, the Jews. One result was an explosion of sects that ranged from the Ranters, who believed that their predestinarianism freed them from any legal or moral strictures here on earth, to the Fifth Monarchy Men, whose members argued that the civil war against Charles, the Antichrist, was preparing the way for the reign of King Jesus.

In 1646 Charles surrendered to the Scots Covenanters, who turned him over to the New Model Army after he agreed to certain changes in government and religion. During a failed attempt within the army to push for more radical social and political reforms, including universal male suffrage, Charles escaped to the Isle of Wight and war resumed. This time, most Scots ranged themselves on the side of the king, as they faced the refusal of the English Parliamentarians to institute a Presbyterian church structure. However, these new allies did Charles no good; he surrendered in late 1648 to a Parliament in the hands of independent Congregationalists. The Commons had been purged of all moderate and royalist influences in the episode known as Pride’s Purge, which signified the transfer of power to one small group of the Long Parliament. This group, known as the Rump Parliament, was under the military leadership of Cromwell and Ireton.

The Rump Parliament immediately placed the king on trial for treason. Charles was accused of treason against the land, of having taken up arms against his own people, and of having violated the political trust through which he governed. His accusers argued further that Charles’s life must be forfeit in order to cleanse the kingdom of sin. Charles’s defense responded that every action the king had taken could be justified through precedent and through a full understanding of the Royal Prerogative. Further, they argued vehemently that the very court in which he was tried had no jurisdiction and was in fact illegal.

The result was a foregone conclusion, although the votes both to convict and to execute were very narrow. Charles was sentenced to



Charles I, shown here in a representation of his execution for treason on January 30, 1649, was convicted by Parliament of crimes against his own people during the English Civil War. His execution was followed by the abolition of the monarchy and a republican government under military leader Oliver Cromwell. (Library of Congress)

be beheaded for treason against the people, a sentence carried out on January 30, 1649. Only after his death was his office, the monarchy, abolished; Charles died as a king, tried and executed by his subjects. Indeed, the Scots immediately recognized his son, Charles II, as the rightful ruler of Scotland, and eventually helped him escape to the continent to safety within the French court. The House of Lords was also abolished after the monarchy, leaving only the Rump of the Commons as a holdover from the traditional government of the realm.

THE PROTECTORATE AND MILITARY RULE

The Rump moved quickly to dismantle the monarchy, not only to legally eliminate Charles's two sons as heirs but also to take over Crown lands and replenish war-drained coffers by selling off the property of crown and church as well as the significant art collection that had

been amassed by the Stuart kings. Oliver Cromwell, who already commanded great respect within his army, became the dominant member of the Council of State erected to govern the newly proclaimed republic. This council worked with the Rump, still the sitting Parliament, to eliminate all vestiges of divine right monarchy and Episcopalian hierarchy and theology. At the same time, however, more radical groups were barred from power. New laws against blasphemy—sparked by deep distrust of the Ranters and other sectaries—were joined to a new and extensive program of government censorship. Radical and even moderate groups, such as the Leveller faction within the New Model Army, were ruthlessly suppressed.

Cromwell and his army were kept extraordinarily busy during the first years of the republic, quelling uprisings not only at home but also, more bloodily, in Ireland and in Scotland. The Irish Rebellion of 1641 had resulted in localized massacres of Protestant settlers, while significant numbers of Irish Catholics had joined with the Royalists against the Puritans, who represented a fearful unknown. After Charles's execution, Cromwell and Ireton turned their military energies against the Irish guerillas, killing hundreds of thousands and leaving hundreds of thousands more to die of disease and famine; some one-third of Irish Catholics died between 1650 and 1653, while countless others were transported as indentured servants to English colonies in North America and the Caribbean. Land seized from the Irish was redistributed to both English soldiers (in lieu of back wages) and Scots Covenanters, and Catholic peasants were forcibly relocated, so that Catholic landownership dropped from 60 percent in the 1630s to less than 9 percent by 1654.

Scotland too posed a serious threat; Cromwell reacted to the Scots' coronation of Charles II with similar military ferocity, killing nearly 60,000 Scots before that country was subdued. By 1654, Scotland and Ireland were both firmly under English military control: Ireland under Cromwell's son Henry and Scotland under General George Monck.

Back in England, after a failed attempt at a more godly administration via Cromwell's handpicked Parliament of Saints, a new 1654 constitution known as the Instrument of Government remodeled the executive branch of government once again. The Council of State would henceforth assist Cromwell, now Lord Protector; an elected single-chamber parliament would convene triennially; and England would be administered by 12 major generals from Cromwell's army. This new government would be supported by a new property tax on all Royalists. Money was desperately needed, for the proceeds

from the sale of church lands and art had long since been spent, and England was now at war with both Catholic Spain and the Protestant Netherlands. England was moving into a new phase as a military regime—still a republic, still far from a democracy, holding control over Scotland and Ireland only through brutal military occupation, and with England itself now under the control of a standing army.

In 1657 the council gave Cromwell the right to choose his successor. In September 1658, Cromwell died, and his third son Richard became Protector. Richard, however, had no interest in political leadership and lacked the backing of the military; within seven months he willingly acceded to the army's demands that he reconvene the Rump Parliament, which had never been formally dissolved, and then happily retired to the countryside. The reconvened Rump, however, immediately locked horns with the army, and the army forced it to disband. The country toppled on the brink of anarchy: no parliament, no leader, no constitution, no tax collection, no judicial machinery, no faith in the law, no trade. Chaos reigned.

At this juncture the commander of the army in Scotland, General George Monck, gathered his troops and marched south to London, where he and his compatriots summoned the old Long Parliament—not the Rump, but the entire body of elected MPs who were still technically undismissed. Many had died and many were failing; of the 547 elected in 1640, only about half were able to come to Westminster. But when they reconvened, the first thing they did was to officially dissolve themselves, as they were bound to do under the act passed by Charles I and before any new parliament could be called. New elections followed, under the supervision of the army to prevent fraud and coercion, and a strongly royalist group of men was elected to the new parliament.

Technically, since no king had called the body together, it was a convention rather than a parliament and thus was known as the Convention Parliament. And this group of men, not only Royalist but devoted as well to the former established church with its episcopal hierarchy, began the delicate process of negotiations with Charles's son, Charles II, in exile on the continent. They asked Charles II to make certain promises: they wanted him to settle the army's back pay, which was significant, to confirm all the land sales made during the Protectorate and to call new elections. Charles refused to negotiate. Given the state of his kingdom, he held all the trump cards, and the Convention Parliament warily agreed to restore him without conditions. On May 25, 1660, he entered London amid great cheering, without a drop of blood having been shed in the long 18 months since Cromwell's death.

THE RESTORATION

What would a restored monarchy do to reestablish stability and peace and to secure the legitimacy of the throne? How much of the king's reign would be marked by a quest for vengeance? Charles was young, handsome, and marked by years of exile; as a result of his difficult early life, he developed a deep streak of cynicism that left him canny, practical, flexible, and determined to enjoy his life as king. Known as "the merry monarch," he almost immediately set about to eradicate the Puritanism that he held responsible for his father's defeat. As a symbol of his own power, Charles ordered the bodies of Oliver Cromwell, Henry Ireton, and several others who had signed the death warrant against his father to be dug up and decapitated; nine still-living regicides were hanged, drawn, and quartered for treason, and several others were imprisoned or barred from office.

Charles had pledged in 1649 to support the Presbyterian Kirk in Scotland; now he moved to restore the church hierarchy in England. English Puritans became known as Dissenters, signifying not a purer form of religious belief and piety but rather a potentially dangerous disagreement with the state religion and thus with the state itself. And dissent was contained and punished through a number of laws known collectively as the Clarendon Code, which applied to England (penal codes against Dissenters and Catholics in Ireland would follow later on). The 1661 Corporation Act excluded non-Anglicans from local political office; the 1662 Act of Uniformity penalized ministers unwilling to swear an oath to uphold the entire contents of the Book of Common Prayer (Ireland would get a similar act in 1666); the 1664 Conventicle Act imposed harsh punishments—including but not limited to stiff fines—on those who attended dissenting meetings. Much of the early force of the Conventicle Act was turned upon Quakers, who suffered terribly in the 1660s, but all forms of religious Puritanism were vulnerable.

Charles also used other, extralegal means to ostracize Dissenters, setting a tone of decadence within his court and encouraging extravagant behavior among his aristocracy in a clear message to Puritans that the days of self-denial were over—at least among the wealthy. Charles himself became notorious for his many mistresses and the veritable stable of illegitimate children he sired, even as his pious and reserved wife, Catherine of Braganza, failed to produce any royal heirs. He also rescinded laws against theaters and other public entertainment, ushering in a period marked by wit, eroticism, and excess. Necklines plunged, condoms were available on the open market,

and Sundays became days of enjoyment and self-indulgence rather than strict observance of the Sabbath. Much of this remained within the capital, but even outside London many formerly Puritan parishes began to relax their Sabbatarianism as new parish priests came to fill their pulpits. Even the 1665–1666 outbreak of plague and the Great Fire of London in 1666 did not restore the harsh piety of Cromwell's Rule of the Saints. Charles's own intellectual interests were expressed in deliberate contradiction to the Puritans: he was an energetic supporter of the secular arts and became the first royal patron of England's Royal Society, founded in 1660 for the advancement of science and numbering Isaac Newton among its members.

While many of his subjects welcomed or at least tolerated the relaxation of Puritan standards, and were happy to see the reintroduction of an episcopal hierarchy, Charles's apparent toleration for Catholicism was not so easily accepted. Charles had been raised by a French Catholic mother, had spent years in exile in the court of his French cousin, Louis XIV, and had married a Catholic wife. The unshakeable belief in the minds of many in his kingdom, that Catholicism was inextricably linked to political absolutism, was underscored by Charles's clear affection for the French royal family as well as his diplomatic overtures to Catholic Spain. And although certain aspects of the Royal Prerogative had been abolished by his father, Charles still enjoyed broad powers of independent action, especially regarding foreign policy.

In 1670 Charles negotiated the Treaty of Dover, which pledged England and France to come to one another's aid in time of war. In 1672 France and the Netherlands entered into the Third Dutch War. England, which had already fought two wars against the Dutch (1652–1654 and 1665–1667) to establish and maintain its mercantile superiority, entered the war on the side of France. Charles immediately put into effect secret clauses of the Treaty of Dover, using his prerogative powers to suspend penal laws against Catholics (although these laws remained in place against other Dissenters). A furious Parliament was powerless until 1673, when Charles was forced to ask for more war funds. Parliament responded by passing the Test Act of 1673, requiring that all MPs and government officers be observant Anglicans and swear an oath of allegiance to the king as the supreme head of the Church of England. The act, which extended the clauses of the 1661 Corporation Act that had targeted local government officials in a similar way, forced out of office several of Charles's closest advisors, including his own brother James, who was Lord Admiral of the British Navy. Despite this concession, by 1674 Charles was forced to withdraw from the war.

Shortly thereafter, to placate his Protestant subjects, Charles arranged the betrothal of his niece Mary, the daughter of his brother James, to her cousin, the Protestant William of Orange. William was a grandson of Charles I and the nephew of Charles II, and thus in line to the English throne in his own right. William and the Dutch were still at war with France, and Charles had no intention of joining his nephew against the French; he did, however, see the 1677 marriage as a way to help alleviate some of the pressures of anti-Catholicism already gripping the country. Much of this pressure was directed at Charles's brother James, his heir, who had converted to Catholicism years before. In the Popish Plot of 1678 James was named—along with a number of high-ranking men, his wife Mary, and Charles's own wife, Catherine of Braganza—as the centerpiece of a purported plot by the Jesuits and the French to kill the sitting king and elevate James in his stead.

In the midst of this fever of anti-Catholicism, Anthony Cooper, the Earl of Shaftesbury and a longtime member of Charles's government, introduced a bill in 1679 to formally exclude James from inheriting the throne. Shaftesbury had spent a number of years shaping a group of men who would eventually become the formal Whig Party. Anti-Catholic and anti-French, they tended to vote as a block in the House of Commons, although true party organization was still far away. Beginning in 1679, this group pushed for a formal Exclusion Bill that would remove the threat of a Catholic king. The so-called Exclusion Crisis resulted in Charles simply proroguing Parliament. The Long Parliament under Charles I had passed laws mandating that it be called triennially but had not anticipated that a king would call a parliament but then refuse to allow members to assemble.

Charles had calculated correctly that even the most energetic of the Whigs did not want civil war. At the same time, he began to use the ancient powers of quo warranto—literally “by what warrant”—to oust Whigs from local power and to place royalists—now the Tory Party—in their place. By 1685, when Charles lay dying, he could rest assured that he had done all within his power to hand to his brother a realm securely in the control of Tories.

Despite this careful staging, James II (1685–1688) was forced to abdicate within four years of his ascendancy. Much of this was due to personality. Whereas Charles had been intelligent, witty, and lazy, his brother was slow, hardworking, and dour; further, he viewed any divergence of opinion as outright rebellion and selected his advisors accordingly. And whereas Charles had waited until the moments

before his death to openly convert to Catholicism, James had embraced the faith years earlier and had taken as his second wife a devout Catholic, Mary of Modena.

Initially, however, his subjects tolerated even if they did not warmly welcome him. An abortive uprising to replace James with Charles's illegitimate son, the Duke of Monmouth, was viciously put down, and James's first parliament was overwhelmingly Tory, ready to support their king in anything so long as it was not pro-France or pro-Vatican. But James moved quickly to bring his fellow Catholics back into the mainstream of British life through a widespread program of "Romanization." This program included suspending the Test Acts for Catholics and Dissenters alike, establishing a new church court aimed at punishing Protestants, founding the Catholic Magdalen College at Oxford University, and replacing Tories in office with Whigs and Dissenters, whom he calculated would be more receptive to changes in the state church.

In all of this James seriously miscalculated. Even as he acted to antagonize the Tories, who should have been his natural supporters, his son-in-law was being courted as a potential "invader" who could save the country from its king. William of Orange regarded the British Crown as a tool for his greater project of containing a France continually at war with the Dutch. But it was not a serious part of his military plans until James and his wife, Mary of Modena, did the unthinkable and produced a male, and Catholic, heir.

The baby's birth galvanized both Whigs and Tories, many of whom agreed that invasion by an invited Protestant leader was a much more attractive option than an apparently inevitable civil war. They extended their invitation to William on the same day that James lost an important court case against seven Anglican bishops who had refused to acquiesce in his Romanization campaign. Many of these men used the work of John Locke to justify their decision, arguing that James had failed to fulfill his obligations as ruler and had forced them, the sovereign people, to form a new government. Locke's works would be published in the following year as the *Two Treatises of Government*, but they had been circulating among Shaftesbury's supporters since the Exclusion Crisis.

William answered the call and invaded on November 1, 1688, under a banner that read, "For the restoration of the constitution and the true religion in England, Scotland, and Ireland." James was appalled, unable to rally his own troops, and faced with a series of bloodless coups as one city after another joined the invaders. By mid-December

he was forced to open negotiations, but William's proposals were so purposely outrageous that James was both disgusted and defeated. He bundled his wife and infant son off to France and followed soon after, tossing the Great Seal of the government into the River Thames as he went.

This nearly bloodless revolution, almost immediately called the Glorious Revolution, was not concluded until William and Mary had actually accepted the crown. William refused to act as consort or, as he put it—comparing the position of consort to the role of an upper servant—a “gentleman usher.” He demanded instead that he and his wife rule jointly as equals. Further, he demanded new elections before the coronation so that he could receive the crown from a duly elected body—another convention parliament, since it had not been summoned by a sitting king. This convention drafted a Declaration of Rights, presenting it along with the crown to William and Mary as co-monarchs.

William and Mary, in accepting the crown, took a coronation oath that differed significantly from the oath used before 1689. Previous rulers had sworn to confirm the laws and customs granted by the crown, but beginning in 1689 all rulers had to swear to govern by the laws of Parliament. It was an important shift in the location of power and in the mutual relationships of Crown, Parliament, and law: the model of king-in-parliament was now firmly and irrevocably established. Infrequent attempts by James's son and grandson to regain the throne would fail to gather much support within Britain.

The Declaration of Rights became the Bill of Rights, and among the provisions guaranteeing the ancient rights and liberties of the subject were clauses preventing any future monarch from adhering to the Roman Catholic faith or from taking a Catholic spouse. Other provisions outlawed the prerogative powers of dispensing and suspending laws; outlawed a standing army in peacetime; reaffirmed the Triennial Act and added clauses that made it impossible for the Crown to manipulate the process of calling and dismissing Parliament; and confirmed the rights that had by now come to be regarded universally as “ancient liberties.”

The Act of Settlement in 1701 further cemented the idea that Parliament was a true partner in governance, when Parliament itself determined that the crown would pass from the childless and widowed William (Mary died in 1694) to Mary's sister Anne and through Anne's heirs to the House of Hanover, a distant branch of the family, bypassing altogether the exiled Stuarts.

NOTE

1. John Pym, "Speech to Parliament, November 25, 1640," quoted in J. P. Kenyon, *The Stuart Constitution, 1603–1688: Documents and Commentary* (Cambridge University Press, 1986), 191–192.

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William III to William IV: 1689–1837

TURNING OUTWARD

The rulers of 18th-century Britain presided over a union of kingdoms increasingly caught up in global affairs. The period between the Glorious Revolution of 1688–1689 and the accession of Victoria in 1837 was marked by chronic war, rapid imperial expansion, and political and economic transition, from the formal union with Scotland to the pursuit of economic and political projects in the Americas, Asia, and Africa. From William III (1689–1702) and Mary II (1689–1694) through Mary's sister Anne (1702–1714) and on through the four German Georges (1714–1830) and William IV (1830–1837), rulers after the Glorious Revolution energetically pursued a multipart Britain that was the heart of an international empire increasing in size and importance.

Britain itself became a larger kingdom with the 1707 Act of Union that formally established the United Kingdom of Great Britain (the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland would not be established until 1801). The act dissolved a separate Scottish parliament—45 Scottish MPs were instead elected to the Parliament in Westminster—but

preserved the Scottish Presbyterian Church, the Kirk, as the state church and retained the separate Scottish legal system. Wales continued in its position as a formally “incorporated, united, and annexed” part of England, sending its own MPs to Westminster and adopting English as the language of government, the law, and education, thereby shutting out most commoners, who continued to speak Welsh. Wales would remain under the broad umbrella of the Anglican Church until the spread of Methodism, beginning around 1735, which culminated in a break from the Anglican Communion and the formation of the Calvinist Methodist Church in 1811. Ireland also retained its status, held as part of the English kingdom through force and under duress. Irish Catholics continued to be prohibited from bearing arms, holding public office, or sitting in the separate Irish parliament that met until 1801; they were also forced to financially support the Protestant Church of Ireland and could not inherit property from Protestants.

The North American colonies that would break away in 1776 were well established by William III’s reign, as were settlements in other parts of the globe: colonies in the West Indies by 1700 included Antigua, Barbados, and the Bahamas, while settlements had begun in parts of coastal Africa nearly a century earlier. Where settlements did not yet exist, economic temptations attracted English privateers, especially in Central and South America. James Cook staked a British claim to Australia in 1770, although the first convicts and overseers would not arrive in Australia until 1788, after it became impossible to transport criminals to the former American colonies. The British Empire was nowhere near its pinnacle, but the shaded portions of the map on page 120 were already increasing in number and they brought with them new responsibilities and worries for the Crown.

William, who ruled alone after Mary’s death in 1694, helped thoroughly reorient the English crown toward the European continent. As Prince of Orange and, after 1696, stadtholder of the Netherlands province of Drenthe, he continued to prosecute his expensive and complicated wars against the French and the Spanish, wars that often expanded to include much of Europe. The War of the League of Augsburg (1689–1697) concluded with an indecisive treaty. The War of the Spanish Succession (1702–1713) pitted a number of allies against France, which sought to expand its power at the end of the Hapsburg era; for Britain, this war ended with the Peace of Utrecht, in which Britain gained Gibraltar and Minorca from Spain and Nova Scotia, the remainder of Newfoundland, and Hudson’s Bay from France. This war thus not only substantially increased British control in North America but also cemented Britain’s claims as the major sea

power in Europe. The treaty also granted England a 30-year contract to supply Spanish sugar islands in the West Indies with slaves from Africa, significantly expanding a slave trade that had been established in 1660 under the Royal African Trading Company (which would be dissolved by a royal act in 1750).

The subsequent peace was tense, however: a lack of declared war simply masked chronic rivalries especially with France, particularly in India where the East India Company continued to deliberately intervene in the local political struggles of native states in order to maintain control over an increasingly lucrative source of trade. War in India was averted, but imperial hunger became a driving force as France and England competed to claim and maintain international supremacy.

A third formally declared war pitted British naval forces against the Spanish, who were accused of winking at atrocities committed by the Spanish Coast Guard against the English naval captain Robert Jenkins. Popular sentiment supported revenge, and despite the efforts of Prime Minister Robert Walpole to avoid a costly engagement, war began in 1739 to prevent the Spanish from forming an alliance with France. This quaintly named War of Jenkins' Ear shaded into the War of the Austrian Succession in 1740, eventually pulling most of Europe into an expensive and inconclusive conflict that was fought both on the continent and, inevitably, throughout the extensive colonial holdings of the major European powers. This eight-year engagement cost England alone £80 million and ending with almost no significant changes to the world map. Britain itself gained nothing new.

This peace was also brief. For nine years outright warfare was avoided, but 1755 saw the outbreak of the Seven Years' War (1757–1763). For Britain, the main opponent was France once again; this time, the main theater of war was in North America, although the trade rivalry on the Indian subcontinent continued to shade into outright political struggle as both the East India Company and French traders established control, often violently, over local ruling families and demanded increasing supplies of men and weapons to protect these new, unequal trading partners. The British largely vanquished their French rivals on the subcontinent and continued to expand a commercial presence that required significant military and then bureaucratic support. In North America, British troops were also successful in wresting control from the French and in a series of battles in the West Indies temporarily gained the French islands of Dominica, Martinique, Guadeloupe, and St. Lucia for the British Crown. The Peace of Paris, signed in 1763, awarded to Britain the entirety of French holdings in North America except for Louisiana and a portion of Newfoundland,

while France regained control of its former West Indies holdings and returned to India in a diminished presence. Britain gained recognition as the largest imperial power in Europe, commanding superior sea forces and controlling vast trading relationships.

CROWN AND GOVERNMENT

The year 1763 thus signaled the end to nearly a century of war, much of it pitting Britain against France. It was an expensive century, and as such, it required almost constant parliamentary action to vote extra monies and to levy new forms of taxation. This in itself required a close relationship between Crown and Parliament, a relationship cemented by the constant drift of royal attention to the continent. William III focused on his Dutch holdings, while the Hanoverian kings who succeeded after the death of Queen Anne (1702–1714), the last of the Stuarts, were at least as preoccupied with their Hanoverian interests as they were with their new, and to them foreign, British kingdoms. Indeed, the first two Hanoverian kings, George I (1714–1727) and George II (1727–1760), regarded themselves as German first and English a far second, mostly ignoring the other portions of their British kingdom. Indeed, George I did not deign to learn the language of his English subjects. Not surprisingly, the result in Britain was the strengthening of ministerial power as the two rival political parties, Tory and Whig, vied for royal favor and strove to control the riches of patronage under the Hanoverian kings. Ministerial success rested on managing the Crown but also on managing Parliament, while Parliament in its turn was indispensable in a century of war through its powers of the purse.

Under this system of increased royal dependence on ministers and Parliament, oligarchic government became a fact of political life. And for much of the century, that oligarchy was controlled by the Whig Party, although Anne herself favored the Tories. Indeed, George I took the throne with the full knowledge that he owed his position to the support of both the Whigs and the small number of Tories who had acquiesced in the Act of Settlement of 1701, which dictated the succession after Anne's death. Despite the virtual lock on power enjoyed by the Whigs, which by the end of William's reign was led by a group of ministers known as the Junto, the reality of 18th-century politics forced the Whigs not only to work with the Tories but also to operate under the knowledge that very significant power continued to reside in the Crown. Certain royal powers fell into disuse; Anne, for instance, was the last ruler to use the royal veto. But while the Crown might

have to swear a coronation oath to uphold the laws of the country and of Parliament rather than to rule above the law, the monarch still maintained crucial control over the ministry through the powers of appointment and dismissal.

Oligarchic government was itself dependent on the leadership of shrewd men in these appointed offices. The most powerful of these appointed ministers under the Hanovers was Robert Walpole, who as the first *de facto* prime minister (1721–1742) established the framework of the modern premiership. Walpole came to power during the economic crisis known as the South Sea Bubble, an episode in 1720 that involved the private South Sea Company's plan to finance some 20 percent of the country's debt, much of it from past wars and ongoing military spending. Massive stock speculation—share prices quintupled in the five months after the initial offering—and insider trading led to the collapse of the company. Walpole, untainted by any personal relationship to the directors, negotiated a transfer of much of the South Sea stock to the new Bank of England and the East India Company, thus averting a national economic disaster. The Bubble Act of 1720 prohibited the establishment of any joint-stock company without an act of parliament or a royal charter, legislation that would not be repealed until 1825.

Walpole also became Chancellor of the Exchequer and First Lord of the Treasury in 1721, in which latter capacity he introduced extensive new excise taxes to finance the wars with France. Walpole's excise taxes served another purpose as well: they brought more men into the government to collect these taxes. And the use of these so-called place-men, who owed their positions to the patronage of the various members of the government, was an important characteristic of Hanoverian society. Walpole, like many others, believed that patronage created men with a vested interest in the prosperity of the nation, contributing to the public good and also, not unimportantly, casting appropriate votes when it came time to elect members of Parliament. Patronage was the glue that held the system together. Those who paid these new taxes were less impressed with this glue, however, than were the government's ministers or the tax collectors who lined their own pockets. Indeed, Walpole and his fellows were transformed into patriarchs of the criminal underclasses in John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera* (1728), in which corruption and influence were portrayed as theft and deceit. But the system of finance served the government well, even as it provided grounds for grousing and annoyance that would eventually swell into outright antagonism.

The machinery of government was in place to serve the king, protect the nation, maintain order, expand the empire, and raise money to

carry out these tasks effectively and efficiently. Stability, not change, was the goal; war abroad might be a fact of life, but rebellion at home was not to be tolerated. Walpole and his successors as prime minister framed the duties of government in terms of efficiency and domestic tranquility even as they continued to fund European wars and to shape a growing empire. Those duties were increasingly broad: Henry Pelham (prime minister 1743–1754), for example, not only reorganized the Royal Navy and, after peace was declared in 1748, rapidly reduced military expenditures and cut the land tax by 50 percent but also presided over Britain's reluctant adoption of the Gregorian Calendar in 1751, which finally placed the kingdom on the same chronological footing as the rest of the continent.

THE THREAT OF JACOBITISM

Walpole and his successors were faced not only with war abroad but also with potential revolution at home, in the Jacobite uprisings of 1715 and 1745. The "15" sought to place James II's son, James Francis Edward (popularly referred to as the Old Pretender), on the throne to restore the Stuart line. The accession of George I after Anne's death in 1714 was a deliberate break with the Stuart dynasty and provided an opportune moment to gather Stuart supporters together. Unsuccessful appeals to the pope and to France notwithstanding, the Jacobites in Scotland raised the standard of the Pretender on September 6 at Braemar, amassing arms and men as they moved southward under the leadership of the Earl of Mar. A rising in Northumberland signaled a level of Jacobite support in England as well, but these rebels were forced to surrender in early November as the government under Walpole took rapid action. The Pretender himself landed on British soil only in December, by which point the tide had turned against the Jacobites. He and the Earl of Mar fled to France, leaving many of their supporters in England and Scotland to face imprisonment or execution. The 1717 Indemnity Act freed several hundred prisoners after the leaders of the "15" had been executed. A 1719 uprising, this one with the help of the Spanish, was more easily put down, and Walpole and his successors, including Henry Pelham, believed that the threat was contained.

However, a second major uprising in 1745 built on the resentments of Jacobites who had forfeited their lands in the earlier rebellion and who wanted an end to the Union of 1707 and the restoration of the Old Pretender. They made common cause with English Tories who had been informally shut out from government and with the Irish who

looked to the Stuarts for the restoration of some level of Irish independence and Catholic equality. The “45” was a bloodier and costlier set of uprisings, involving a number of Scottish Highland clans backed in part by the French. The Old Pretender’s son, Charles Edward (the Young Pretender), scored a rousing victory against British government forces in the Battle of Prestonpans and then marched southward with several thousand troops. He was ultimately defeated by George II’s son William Augustus, the Duke of Cumberland, at the Battle of Culloden on April 16, 1746. Charles fled, escaping to the Isle of Skye disguised as a female servant and eventually making it back to France. The Battle of Culloden broke the uprising. Some 3,500 Jacobites were arrested for treason; of those who survived imprisonment, 120 were executed, 900 were eventually pardoned, and some 1,800 were transported to the American colonies.

The aftermath of the “15” and especially the “45” shaped the kingdom in a variety of ways. The Highland clans were emasculated through a series of laws that limited chieftains’ powers, transferred traditional clan jurisdictions to the Crown, disarmed anyone not in direct military service, and even outlawed the wearing of the kilt and



Charles Edward Stuart, known as Bonnie Prince Charlie or the Young Pretender, was the grandson of James II, who had been forced to abdicate in 1688–1689. Like his father, the Old Pretender, he led a failed attempt to reclaim the British throne. He is shown here in 1746, escaping to France after the disastrous defeat of Jacobite supporters at the Battle of Culloden. The uprising, known as “the 45,” was the last serious attempt to restore the Stuart family to the throne. (Library of Congress)

other traditional clothing. Prayers for the health and life of the Hanoverian kings were mandated in every Scottish schoolroom in the wake of the “45.” The Duke of Cumberland quickly became known as “The Butcher of Culloden” in popular culture, and the failed uprisings were evoked in a number of literary works that included Sir Walter Scott’s Waverly novels of the early 19th century and the adventure tales of Robert Louis Stevenson several decades later. Elaborate alternative lines of succession were traced in the years after the uprisings, accompanied by surreptitious toasts to “The King over the Water.” Politically, however, the Young Pretender’s abandonment of the throne drew the teeth from plans for future rebellion. By the accession of George III (1760–1820), the threat of Jacobitism had truly faded.

GEORGE III, REBELLION, AND REVOLUTION

George himself both represented a new type of king and stimulated certain changes in the monarchy. He was the first of the Hanover line to be born in England, and he took a lively and intelligent interest in questions of constitution, law, and foreign policy. Further, his attitude toward the responsibilities of the Crown and the dignity of the throne was characterized by a profound sense of duty. In this he differed widely from his grandfather, George II.

Despite his personal convictions, however, George’s reign was subject to critical public scrutiny, which often took the form of attacks on the king’s character and ability. His first years on the throne, for example, were plagued by the works of radical John Wilkes, elected to Parliament in 1757, three years before George’s accession. Wilkes attracted and indeed fomented scandal and used his personal charm, his wife’s fortune, and his parliamentary privilege to mount constant attacks on the king, his own political rivals, and his literary critics. He bought a small paper, *The North Briton*, and published scurrilous reports of government mismanagement, going so far as to call the 1763 Treaty of Paris a dishonorable end to the war with France. As a sitting MP he could not be arrested for libel, although Parliament passed a law rescinding that protection as Wilkes’s calls for reform gained more and more popular support. The slogan “Wilkes and Liberty” echoed throughout London in his subsequent series of legal entanglements, including expulsion from the House of Commons after he coauthored a lengthy pornographic poem saluting a well-known courtesan. Yet he survived expulsion and served in a number of political offices, including as Lord Mayor of London, becoming notorious for his critiques of British policy in North America and his calls for penal reform and

religious tolerance. Wilkes lost significant popular support during the Gordon Riots of 1780 and moved politically rightward, giving up his more radical positions and opposing the French Revolution.

Another, similar thorn in George's side was the Yorkshire clergyman Christopher Wyvill, who focused on the corruption endemic in the system of political patronage and organized a strong campaign for political reforms that won the support of the landed gentry. The goals of this so-called Yorkshire Association included shorter parliaments and more equal representation in rural boroughs, which Wyvill and others believed would help curb the excessive partisanship and high taxation that characterized the early ministries of George's reign. Wyvill was especially critical of the American war, which he believed was prosecuted on terms that enriched the powerful placemen within the government at the expense of the people.

George rebuked these and other critics. His vision of his kingship focused on upholding and extending imperial domination, an expensive proposition that rested on the continuation of an increasingly corrupt fiscal and political system. The loss of the American colonies after a protracted war from 1776 through 1783 eventually exposed the problems within this status quo: any economic system built on the expectations of constant warfare and anchored by minimal long-term alliances was inherently unstable.

Moving both king and Parliament to a new model of imperial power became the task of George's most famous and successful prime minister, William Pitt, "The Younger," who assumed the premiership in 1783. Pitt, the son of William Pitt the Elder (later the Earl of Chatham), who had served until 1761, was elected to the House of Commons in 1781. When he became the youngest prime minister in British history two years later, at the age of 24, he recognized the opportunities triggered by the loss of the American colonies. France was weakened by war debts that would eventually help usher in its own revolution; Britain had a new era of at least temporary peace in which to explore much-needed financial and political reforms.

Thus, under Pitt's careful guidance, George was persuaded to mend relations with his parliaments and to accommodate limited programs of change, which Pitt presented as reflecting George's own good instincts. One early example of this relationship came in 1784 with the India Act of that year; George had blustered against a 1783 East India Bill, which attempted to nationalize and reorganize the East India Company, and told his House of Lords that any supporter would be regarded as a personal enemy of the Crown. Pitt introduced a new bill that included many of the earlier bill's provisions for reform but vested

the power to appoint overseers of the proposed East India Board of Control in the hands of the king. His shrewd handling of George's partisan approach to governance was both necessary and tireless. Pitt was able to enact a broad program of fiscal reform between 1786 and 1792, reducing the national debt by more than half, targeting smugglers, and lowering taxes on such consumer goods as tea and tobacco. He was less successful at political reforms, supporting many of the changes proposed by Wyvill and the Yorkshire Association but unable to end "rotten boroughs" or extend the franchise.

Pitt's enemies in Parliament, who were legion, leapt at the opportunity to take back the control of government in 1788, when George was laid low by his first attack of the chronic illness that would eventually render him permanently unfit. George's condition, interpreted as "madness" although almost certainly caused by the metabolic disorder porphyria, formed the main portion of his legacy in popular memory. An initial attack in 1788 prompted the Regency Crisis, in which the prince regent prepared to assume control. He was widely expected to dismiss Pitt and most of the rest of his father's ministry, but the king recovered after four months of illness and held onto power—directing among other things the entry into a new war with France in 1793—until he became completely incapacitated in 1810. (Pitt died in 1806 and was succeeded by William Grenville, who was prime minister for only a year but presided over the end of the slave trade in 1807.)

THE REGENCY, GEORGE IV, AND WILLIAM IV

It was at this juncture that the prince regent—referred to by his critics simply as "Prinny"—came to power, bringing with him a history of dissolute behavior and chronic debt. A weakness for women and alcohol was matched by a love of luxury and personal indiscretion, all of which were extremely distasteful to his morally upright parents. In 1795 the king had forced his son—whose earlier marriage to a Catholic widow, Maria Fitzherbert, was valid in the eyes of the church but illegal under English law—to marry Princess Caroline of Brunswick in exchange for the payment of the younger George's massive debts. The marriage was a private disaster; the prince, who continued to live with Mrs. Fitzherbert, placed his own people, including at least one of his mistresses, in positions around Caroline and strictly limited her access to their only child, Charlotte, born nine months after the marriage.

Both partners were the target of equally excessive gossip and rumor, but while the Prince was roundly criticized for his drinking, his debts, and his extensive and constant redecoration of his royal residences,

Caroline became a popular favorite and was frequently portrayed in the press as the wronged wife. In 1814, after years of living apart from her husband, Caroline left for Italy and a fresh onslaught of rumors and gossip. Princess Charlotte married the future Leopold I of Belgium in 1816 but died the following year after delivering a stillborn son. Her father, whose hatred of his estranged wife had only increased with the passage of time, refused to inform Caroline of the death and used the moment to pursue a legal divorce. Both parties appeared to be inching toward some formal agreement when George III died in 1820 and the prince took the throne as George IV. Caroline arrived at Westminster for the coronation only to have the doors shut in her face.

Caroline's cause was championed by the popular press and adopted as a powerful weapon by the new king's opponents, including reformist lawyer Henry Brougham, who overlooked Caroline's own numerous personal indiscretions and elevated her as a symbol of virtuous womanhood victimized by a licentious ruler and cruel husband. Even after her sudden death in 1821, the damage to the personal reputation of the king lived on. George's inability to negotiate with his ministers, as well as his lack of political finesse, further strengthened ministries and parliaments at the expense of the Crown, and his personal life provided no counterbalance. Only his love of pageantry and the arts could be regarded as positive royal attributes, and these were not enough to win widespread affection, especially when balanced against his massive debts and his reputation for dissolute living. The novelist Jane Austen had written to a friend in 1813, "Poor woman, I shall support [Caroline] as long as I can, because she is a Woman and because I hate her Husband,"¹ and that sentiment continued to be widespread even after Caroline's death.

As regent, George had allowed power to slip into the hands of his ministers, preoccupied as he was with the cultural and social behaviors that became the hallmark of the regency. The early admiration of the prince as a charmer and a rake gave way to widespread contempt; his youthful attention to the fashion and manners of the bon ton, which earned him the informal title of "The First Gentleman of England," gave way to petulant favoritism and widespread mockery. (Charles Dickens would caricature his influence in the mid-century novel *Bleak House*, embodying the regent's style-conscious followers in the deportment-obsessed Mr. Turveydrop.) Male fashion changed to reflect his own adoption of darker colors, looser trousers, and high collars that disguised his increasing girth. His devotion to art and architecture became, like his devotion to women and food, a target of criticism, as he spent millions importing the latest decorative and

architectural fads into his residences. The areas in London that were renovated under the care of his favorite architect, John Nash, included Regent Street, Regent's Park, and the Opera House, but his obsession with extravagant display peaked in the Royal Pavilion at Brighton, which combined an exterior resembling the Taj Mahal with a chinoiserie interior reflecting George's obsession with the Far East.

All of these preoccupations left him little time and less interest in the workings of government. Much of the heavy lifting was done by the prime minister, who by 1820 was no longer simply the Crown's favorite but instead earned his office because he was the obvious leader of the House of Commons. George IV's Tory governments were led by Spencer Perceval, who was assassinated in 1812 by Liverpool merchant John Bellingham, and then Robert Jenkinson, Earl of Liverpool. Both Perceval and Liverpool were strong advocates of continued war with France; war had begun in 1793, before the execution of French king Louis XVI, and had continued throughout the reign of Napoleon with only a brief interlude of peace in 1802–1803. Thus, both George III and the prince regent, like their predecessors, were firmly associated with expensive, protracted war on the continent.

As in previous decades, this French war required economic measures that were widely unpopular; the introduction of the income tax in 1799 was one example and was so reviled that Liverpool repealed it in 1815. The end of the war also meant the end of expensive foreign grain, however, potentially threatening the livelihood of domestic farmers and the rents of English landowners. Liverpool's ministry therefore introduced the first in a series of Corn Laws, which kept the price of wheat, rye, and malt (all classified as "corn") artificially high by barring imports of cheaper grain until domestic grain reached a preset price. In 1816, when the eruption of Mount Tambora in the Dutch East Indies blocked the sun's rays in what became known as the year without a summer, the combination of poor harvests and these corn taxes led to famine and riot, with protests against both Liverpool and the crown. These protests would continue for more than a decade.

George was happy to be distanced from unpopular financial policies, but he was less sanguine about changes to religious law. He opposed the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts in 1828, which permitted non-Anglican Christians for the first time to hold political office. He was even more strenuously opposed to the passage of the 1829 Roman Catholic Relief Act, which finally enacted Catholic emancipation after decades of persecution. Catholic emancipation had been considered and rejected in 1801 with the formal union of Ireland and Great Britain, and had been rejected anew in 1807. Most

Whigs supported the end to persecution against Catholics, but the Crown and the House of Lords consistently opposed any attempt to dismantle the web of legal disabilities preventing non-Anglicans from holding office and, in the case of Catholics, severely limiting property rights and suffrage. The Irish lawyer Daniel O'Connell and his primarily middle-class Catholic Association, activating widespread public support for relief, finally convinced Tories Wellington and Peel to force this measure through a Tory-controlled Parliament. Wellington threatened to resign as prime minister if the king withheld his consent, eventually convincing George that ending religious disabilities was highly preferable to igniting a religious civil war. Many traditional Tories, however, regarded this as the end of the world as they knew it, and the success of the Whigs in the next general election cemented their conviction that church and king were no longer two necessary halves of a whole.

George himself, despite his indifference to the labor of government, was deeply distressed at this evidence that the Crown had apparently lost its ability to direct parliamentary action. When he died the following year, half blind and suffering a combination of heart, bladder, and joint ailments, he left no legitimate children and the crown went to his brother, William IV (1830–1837). William was 64, the oldest ruler to take the throne, and had no legitimate heirs (although he did celebrate his coronation by conferring titles on all nine of his surviving illegitimate children). His happy marriage, abstemious living, and general good nature earned him a reputation of benevolence and amiability. William did nothing to stop the flow of power from the Crown to the House of Commons, supporting the work of his Whig prime minister, Charles Grey, 2d Earl Grey, in such innovations as limits to child labor, the end to the British-controlled Atlantic slave trade, and a sweeping overhaul of the Poor Law in 1834. William's only active interference in the machinery of government came during the battles over political reform shortly after his accession, when he prorogued Parliament and then threatened to pack the House of Lords with reform-minded new nobles who would secure the passage of the Reform Act of 1832.

In the event, such radical action on his part proved unnecessary, although it was a timely reminder that the crown still exercised significant influence. It would, in fact, be years before the Commons could justifiably claim that it was the primary source of governmental power, but under the Hanoverian kings the circumstances that would lead to this argument began to take shape. William's primary and self-proclaimed goal in his waning years was to live long enough to prevent his hated sister-in-law, Princess Victoria of Leiningen, from

gaining control when his niece, the young Princess Victoria, inherited the throne. In this he was successful, dying a month after Victoria reached her 18th birthday.

SOCIETY AND RELIGION

Despite this slow shift in the location of political power, Georgian society as a whole remained relatively stable. Just as the wheels of government moved smoothly only through the linked notions of patronage and place, everyday life was also dependent on mutual relationships. In this case, a society of many “orders” of men and women was glued together through the twin notions of deference to those above and obligation to those below. Ideally, this hierarchy was multilayered enough to accommodate growth and the changes inherent in a world of expanding imperial responsibilities but flexible enough to absorb such changes without recourse to bloodshed. The civil and religious wars of the 1640s were enshrined in national memory, and as a result there was a deliberate lowering of the temperature of both politics and religion as leaders sought to avoid the conflagrations of the previous century. In politics, as we have seen, this was manifested in oligarchic government and the system of patronage, as well as in an almost ridiculous toleration for the abuses they encouraged.

In religion, this focus on stability was reflected in a state church that emphasized “reasonableness” but inadvertently cultivated religious indifference. Officially, this approach to religion was known as “latitudinarianism,” a descriptor designed to signal that the 18th-century church was self-consciously more accommodating than its 17th-century predecessor. Theologically, the Anglican Church continued to hold to the 39 Articles of the Prayer Book, including the article on predestination, but in practical terms the church began to emphasize the importance of man’s own reason and common sense to salvation. Scripture, tradition, and reason were the three legs of the stool. Toleration within this broader view was considered a key to the stability of the realm. And this latitudinarian church also pulled back from its former emphasis on the theological errors of Dissenters, instead intentionally working to create an atmosphere that did not create willing martyrs. It was a successful approach: the number of Dissenters as a proportion of the overall population shrank very rapidly, due in part to what one dissenting minister called “the lenity of the government, the want of a persecution to keep us together.”² Those Dissenters who remained were eventually renamed Nonconformists, a less pejorative label that covered a variety of religious beliefs.

This emphasis on stability and peace rather than theological certitude meant, in practice, that religious enthusiasm of any kind was discouraged. But the resulting moral sleepiness led to a search for more personal forms of religious expression and meaningful piety, a search that was met within the Anglican Church by the development of Wesleyanism among the lower orders and Evangelicalism among the higher.

John Wesley's emphasis on a personal sense of conversion and salvation, communicated in huge open-air meetings throughout the kingdom, combined an emotional faith with a conservative emphasis on social stability. His followers were exhorted to live a godly life in the station to which God had called them, no matter how lowly and full of suffering. Wesley and his brother Samuel, along with fellow cleric George Whitefield, remained firmly within the Anglican fold but injected an electric new energy into the traditions of the faith through preaching and hymnody.

For their part the Evangelicals, whose numbers included Hannah More and William Wilberforce, focused their pious and rigorous attention on the ungodly behavior of those in the higher stations, from the "middling orders" up through the kingdom's aristocracy. They had plenty to work with, as a growing commercial class embraced conspicuous consumption and spent enormous amounts of money on newly available luxury goods. The complacency of the well-to-do, especially when paralleled by the corruption of public officials, had already provided fodder for writers and artists from William Hogarth (1697–1764)—most famous for such engravings as *Marriage a la Mode* and *Rake's Progress*—to John Gay (1685–1732; *The Beggar's Opera* appeared in 1728) and Alexander Pope (1688–1744; *The Rape of the Lock* was published in 1712). The Evangelicals were more sober but just as vigorous in their critiques. Further, they tended to cast their nets widely; among other successes, they persuaded Parliament to end the Atlantic slave trade in 1807. Further efforts ended slavery itself in the British Empire in 1833. These successes were valorized as peculiarly English and would be invoked decades later as American and European missionaries called up the British to help end the slave trade within Africa.

Like the Wesleyan movement, which broke away to form a separate denomination of Methodists only after Wesley's death, the Evangelical movement emphasized personal faith and the necessity of moral behavior in every aspect of life, including work and business where fair dealing was taken as an indicator of the good stewardship of God's gifts. Both movements remained socially conservative despite

the potentially democratic tendencies of the faith. The focus on the world to come helped defuse the dangerously subversive possibilities entwined in the twin emphases on individual morality and the equality of all believers—male and female, rich and poor—before God.

THE EMERGENCE OF CLASS AND SOCIETY: INDUSTRY AND URBANIZATION

The hierarchical nature of 18th-century society worked so long as there were many layered orders, resulting in an extended and productive period of domestic peace for the long decades of Georgian rule. With the advent of the Industrial Revolution, however, Britain began the painful shift to a society organized around three classes. Historian E. P. Thompson famously defined this new society as one in which the interests of each class were both “different from and opposed to” the interests of the others, thus injecting an inescapable note of antagonism into social relations.³ And although social conflict had not been absent from the hierarchical society of the preindustrial period—game laws protecting the rights of the aristocracy and gentry to hunt, for example, were outrageously punitive toward both poachers and the small farmers whose crops might be trampled by horses and hounds—the transition to an industrial urban society introduced new sources of friction that periodically erupted into new types of open conflict.

This transition to an industrializing and urbanizing society laid the foundation for Britain’s status as a modern economic leader. England was the first European country to industrialize—Wales and Ireland and much of Scotland remained rural long beyond the growth of England’s industrial urban centers—and as such both reaped significant rewards and paid tremendous costs. England in the middle of the 1700s enjoyed conditions that would favor a move to industry: peace at home and a consequent climate of confidence that encouraged both inventors and investors, an infrastructure of canals and roads that made movement within the kingdom relatively easy, and surplus labor in the countryside that was not legally tied to the land and could thus migrate to new cities. “King Cotton” propelled England into the industrial era, with raw cotton coming in from the colonies in the West Indies, India, and the southern colonies of North America and finished goods going back out to the same captive markets.

Cotton transformed towns in the north of England into industrial centers. During the same period, roughly the last third of the 18th century, there were equally transformative innovations in steam power and in cheaper, stronger iron products. (For some, these innovations

were too transformative: former Board of Trade president William Huskisson, posthumously dubbed “the unluckiest man in the world,” stepped in front of the inaugural Liverpool-to-Manchester train at the opening ceremony in 1830 and was run over.) When the Napoleonic Wars ended in 1815, the transition away from a planned wartime economy led to explosive changes in labor and industry.

This industrialization, and the growth of urban areas that accompanied it, changed the English world in immediate and often very negative ways, just as it also wrought larger and more subtle changes on Britain and Europe as a whole. In the decades between 1760 and 1830, huge numbers of workers migrated to cities that were incapable of providing adequate housing and hygiene. Between 1801 and 1831, London grew from under 100,000 persons to 1.65 million; Manchester from 89,000 to 223,000; and Liverpool and Birmingham in similar ways. Further north, the population of Edinburgh nearly doubled, and that of Glasgow nearly tripled in the first half of the 19th century. And these new urban dwellers swelled the ranks of industry; the percentage of the English population in the census category of “manufacture, mining, and industry” grew from 29.7 percent in 1801 to 40.8 percent 30 years later.

Attempts to regulate the movement of this new labor pool and to reduce the costs of supporting the jobless led to the harsh Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834—widely known as the New Poor Law—which tied poor relief to the workhouse, deliberately discouraged the migration of labor away from the parish of birth, and placed all responsibility for the support of illegitimate children on the mother. Designed around the idea of “less eligibility,” the new system was purposely meant to be less attractive, or eligible, than any other means of survival in order to deter the poor from seeking assistance. The law succeeded in reducing rates of illegitimacy and gave towns and cities a way to manage the costs of a minimal safety net, but the unintended consequences of the law would eventually include chronic labor imbalances, as unemployed farm workers in the south could not risk leaving their home parishes to take jobs in the north, and the persistence of terrifying rumors about the deliberate starvation of the poor in the new workhouses.

Although there were multiple gradations of skill and education within this new industrial population, many observers collapsed them into a single, unitary, and incendiary working class. Friedrich Engels (1820–1895), most famous for his later collaboration with Karl Marx, wrote a scathing exposé of Manchester in his *Condition of the Working Classes in England* (1844). His descriptions of slum housing, working

families made up of emasculated husbands and unwomanly wives, factory discipline, and incipient revolution frightened the new middle class, that vast portion of men and women who were themselves working without a road map.

These emerging leaders of industry had for their part already turned for guidance to political economists like Adam Smith (1723–1790), Thomas Malthus (1766–1834), and David Ricardo (1772–1823), each of whom articulated “natural” and thus unchangeable laws governing industrial organization, population, and wages. Further justifications for laissez-faire economics could be found in philosophers like Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832) and other utilitarians who recognized the economic powers of the new middle classes. All of these men lauded the virtues that enabled the hard work and success of the middle classes, virtues that would later be enshrined by Samuel Smiles in such volumes as *Self-Help* (1859), *Character* (1871), *Thrift* (1875), and *Duty* (1880). The efforts to reconcile these stark new ideologies with the ingrained and time-honored responsibilities of charity and the tenets of even the most relaxed versions of 18th-century Christianity provided a tense counterpoint to the expansive profit that industrial capitalism seemed to promise.

POLITICAL ACTIVISM: MIDDLE-CLASS AND WORKING-CLASS RADICALISM

Like the working class, the middle class contained widely divergent interests and incomes, but a common sense of anxiety paired with a deeply held belief in progress bound this vast middle class together into a lengthy struggle for social respect and political recognition. Early efforts at political reform generally linked the interests of the industrious and virtuous working and middle classes against the interests of an effete and idle landed class. Most of these efforts were restricted to males; while philosophers like Mary Wollstonecraft argued passionately for the political and social rights of women, these proposals were too radical to divert much attention from more palatable arguments based upon the virtues of the educated middle-class male. Such propaganda had emerged late in the 18th century, employed to great effect by John Wilkes and others, and provided a ready-made language for those working to extend the suffrage beyond the traditional landowning classes.

This campaign to expand the vote was thus framed as a joint battle between the unrepresented but productive middle and working classes, on the one hand, and the unproductive aristocracy, on the

other. The result of years of collaboration, the Whig-sponsored Reform Act of 1832 extended the franchise to adult male householders (i.e., heads of household) who paid annual property taxes of at least £10 in urban areas and, in rural areas, an annual rent of £50. The electorate expanded dramatically in Scotland (from 4,500 to 65,000 eligible voters), nearly doubled in Ireland (from 49,000 to 90,000), and included an estimated 400,000 to 600,000 new voters in England and Wales. Towns like Birmingham and Manchester, whose populations had skyrocketed in the previous decades, were finally allocated their own parliamentary representatives, and attempts were made to eliminate the worst abuses of so-called pocket boroughs (boroughs in the “back pocket” of a single family who chose the representative to be elected) and rotten boroughs (districts with no qualifying voters but which still returned members; the most notorious of these, Old Sarum, had been empty of voting inhabitants since 1220).

While these reforms alarmed many Conservatives who feared that leaseholders could not possibly have the same kind of abiding interest in proper government as actual landowners, and satisfied the moderates who had lobbied for a relatively limited set of changes, they enraged many in the working classes who had joined with middle-class radicals to work for reform. After 1832, working-class radicals generally split from their middle-class brothers, claiming that their interests had been deliberately discarded in the pursuit of an expanded middle-class franchise.

Working-class radicalism, both before and after 1832, took a variety of forms. Trade unions had been outlawed by the Combination Acts of 1799 and 1800, forcing worker protest into the violent channels of the machine-breaking Luddites, who sought to coerce employers to address economic and social grievances in a period of trade depression. Other radical agitation included the failed 1820 Cato Street Conspiracy (in which a former army officer led an attempt to assassinate many of the ministers in Lord Liverpool’s cabinet) and the Peterloo massacre (where a huge open-air meeting outside of Manchester in 1819 to hear orator Henry Hunt was broken up by force, resulting in 11 deaths and hundreds of injuries, the imprisonment of working-class leaders, and the exoneration of the troops who had wielded the bayonets).

The government’s response to such agitation included the Six Acts of 1819, which outlawed large meetings, increased the government’s powers of repression, and tightened up regulations on newspapers and pamphlets. Despite these acts, a radical press flourished in the early 19th century, pressing for an end to censorship and the so-called

taxes on knowledge (taxes on paper, ink, and postage), and providing constant, if illegal, critiques of governmental policies.

Political radicalism provided one focus for the formation of working-class identity. Various clubs and societies, including friendly societies, self-improvement societies, and sick and burial clubs, provided another. The Combination Acts had not banned these mutual aid organizations, and in the years after 1799, these clubs and societies evolved into a significant feature of working-class culture. Many middle-class reformers encouraged and supplemented these efforts; for example, Henry Brougham, MP (who had represented Queen Caroline in 1820) founded the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge in 1825.

After 1824, when the Combination Acts were struck down, trade unions began to legally reemerge and to reclaim their importance in the lives of skilled workingmen. These unions tended to be localized, well organized, and often—like the friendly societies that continued to exist alongside them—centered around the pub as a meeting place where business and sociability could coexist. Most of these early unions avoided the strike as far as possible, instead using collective bargaining to secure wage and hour guarantees. And most of these early unions refused entry to the unskilled, instead limiting membership to the educated and skilled male artisans referred to collectively by historians as the “labor aristocracy.” In 1834–1835, the Grand National Consolidated Trade Union emerged as the first attempt to coordinate unions across the country but failed within a year owing to lack of funding.

Trade unions could not, however, speak to the broad working-class experience outside the factory or workshop. Like the middle class, the “working class” was neither unitary nor cohesive. Differences in education, skill, work experience, and family structure merely heightened the already-profound separations dividing urban and rural workers. Women and children were necessary to both agricultural and factory life, but the problems specific to their work experiences tended to be overwhelmed by the more articulate agendas of male workers. Domestic service employed the vast majority of women, and this segment of the workforce—especially those servants in small households where backbreaking overwork was the norm—remained particularly underrepresented and, in fact, was deliberately ignored by those seeking legal protection for other workers. Most early laws protecting children in the workplace lacked adequate enforcement mechanisms, and horror stories surfaced whenever Parliament was considering new regulations in the face of opposition by factory or mine owners. The

problems of working women, underpaid and often sexually exploited, and of working children, whose parents depended on their meager wages to help pay for food and rent, would remain part of working life for much of the next century.

The commercial underpinnings of this new industrial capitalism were themselves based on the steady expansion of a British Empire that was still built primarily on trade rather than on the more elusive notions of “civilization” that would take hold of the public imagination under Victoria. Peace at home was disturbed but not fatally disrupted in 1789 by the outbreak of revolution in France, and many in the ruling and “middling” orders remained complacent about their influence over the lower orders. This self-satisfaction endured despite the criticisms leveled at the aristocracy and the commercial classes in an expanding press, relatively free by continental standards, which thrived alongside a lively culture of theater, arts, and literature. Intellectual life flourished, not only in the coffeehouse culture of the towns but throughout the kingdom, as witnessed by the prolific output of scientists, economists, philosophers, and novelists associated with the Enlightenment as a whole and the fertile world of the Scottish Enlightenment in particular, where such luminaries as philosopher and skeptic David Hume, political economist Adam Smith, and beloved poet Robert Burns disproportionately influenced the intellectual climate of Europe. Britain as a whole, and England in particular, regarded itself as both particularly deserving of and distinctly blessed by domestic stability and increasing commercial success. The 19th century would change much of that attitude, replacing complacency with anxiety and certainty with doubt.

NOTES

1. Letter from Jane Austen to Martha Lloyd, February 16, 1813, <https://pastnow.wordpress.com/2013/02/15/feb-16-1813-jane-austen-and-the-princess-of-wales>.
2. Strickland Gough, *An Enquiry into the Causes of the Decay of the Dissenting Interest* (London: J. Roberts, 1730), quoted in W. A. Speck, *Stability and Strife: England, 1714–1760* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978), p. 102.
3. E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Vintage Books, 1966).

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Britain in the Victorian Age

A MODEL QUEEN

Although the entire 19th century is often referred to as “Victorian,” Victoria did not take the throne until 1837, ruling until her death in 1901. As queen for 64 years she presided over first a kingdom and then an empire that commanded respect, if not perfect obedience, around the globe. The changes during her reign—economic, political, social, imperial—were so profound that the world of 1837 bore little resemblance to that of 1901. Her strength was her ability to represent the broad middle classes of her kingdom throughout these changes, both to themselves and to observers. She embraced domesticity even as she claimed political dominions that stretched around the globe. She ruled as a wife, marrying her cousin Albert of Saxe-Coburg in 1840 and producing nine children, even as her kingdom only reluctantly began to recognize the injustice of laws that ignored the autonomous legal existence of the married woman. In a period where the direct political power of the crown was considerably diminished, she exerted enormous influence—that most womanly of virtues—and she and Albert



Queen Victoria, shown here in mourning for her beloved husband, Prince Albert, reigned from 1837 to 1901 and gave her name to an era. Under her regime, Britain expanded its empire to include India and colonies in Africa and South Asia and cemented its leadership of the Western world. Although a queen, she opposed political rights for women and instead promoted traditional gender roles and strong family values. (Library of Congress)

energetically patronized developments in science, industry, and the arts. Albert's death in 1861 of typhoid fever left Victoria so bereft that she refused to undertake any of her accustomed duties for months and even years; and while that withdrawal troubled many of her subjects and ministers, her reputation rebounded as her empire spread, so that her death was met with unprecedented displays of national grief and mourning.

EARLY VICTORIAN POLITICS: NEW VOTERS, NEW REFORMS

Victoria retained important symbolic and political functions as head of state even as her reign witnessed the increasing powers of Parliament, particularly within the House of Commons. The

enfranchisement of the solid middle classes in 1832 inevitably altered the ways in which the two major political parties conducted electoral business, and the parties were forced to redefine themselves at intervals as new interests and demands pressed on MPs and ministers. The Whigs (gradually reconstituting themselves into the Liberal Party in the early 1860s) held the majority, and the Tories (formally the Conservative Party beginning in 1834) were in opposition almost continually from 1830 through 1886, until the Liberals split in 1886 over the question of Home Rule for Ireland.

Despite her desire for affectionate personal relationships with her ministers, Victoria's own preferences—most famously for Conservative leader Benjamin Disraeli (created the Earl of Beaconsfield in 1876) over Liberal leader William Ewart Gladstone—could not influence the outcome of elections or policy. Disraeli and Gladstone themselves appeared to be opposites in many ways, with the personally charming and politically opportunistic Disraeli—who famously compared the slog to the prime ministership as a climb to “the top of the greasy pole”—providing an often suspect counterpoint to the occasionally wearisome moral rectitude of Gladstone.

Broadly, the Liberal Party was for many years the party of domestic reform, shaping platforms of increased government intervention despite the party's formal adherence to individualism and free trade. John Stuart Mill's 1859 *On Liberty* provided a philosophical justification for this reimagined relationship between the individual and the state, arguing that individual freedoms could only truly be exercised and protected on a level playing field and that neglecting to remove such impediments to progress as adulterated food, unventilated housing, and inadequate education could be as dangerous and wrong as placing unnecessary restraints on business activity or personal liberty. The Conservative Party defined itself against the Liberals by its staunch and often paternalistic support of the established institutions of crown, church, and landed interests and increasingly deployed the emotional resonances of empire and patriotism in order to turn attention away from radical agitation at home for suffrage and regulatory intervention.

Both parties sought and gained support of the new middle classes, whose men had earned a place at the political table by taming the tiger of industrial capitalism into some kind of predictable order. Middle-class interests were certainly not unified and often clashed with both working and upper classes in an uneven march toward power. Examples of clashes between middle and upper classes included the work of the Anti-Corn Law League (1838–1846), which sought to eliminate

the grain tariffs that benefited aristocratic landowners and promised a reduction in bread prices for the poor, and the Mines and Collieries Act of 1842, which prohibited women and boys from working underground and was framed as limiting the powers of the aristocratic land owners who benefited most immediately from the exploitation of vulnerable labor. At the same time, middle-class men vigorously blocked many attempts to regulate labor in textile mills, as industrialists argued that their interests, and the importance of profit to the entire British economy, trumped the suffering of the working poor; a series of Factory Acts were reluctantly passed to limit hours of women and children and were adopted for other industries only after 1860.

Even as middle-class interests—urban, commercial, and imperial—noisily challenged and clashed with the traditions built on the world of the landed gentry, English society was flexible enough to accommodate their demands, especially since these new voters and their wives adopted codes of behavior that combined the Evangelical emphasis on self-control with new and often restrictive structures of respectability and display. By mid-century, the middle-class family was organized around the model of separate spheres—men in the white-collar and professional workplace, women at home supervising servants and children in a never-ending battle against both dirt and idleness—and had become the recognized foundation of “Englishness.” Political structures and ideologies generally reflected the gendered division of work and home, rejecting early calls for women’s suffrage and pursuing policies that benefited commercial and professional men.

Yet the middle-class voter did not represent the vast range of emerging interests based on class, despite the rhetoric of politicians and social critics. The sense of betrayal experienced by working-class radicals during the period of the 1832 Reform Act, when their cooperation had been key to the passage of a bill that ultimately rejected their participation and ignored their interests, inevitably colored politics for decades. Stymied in their claims to suffrage, working-class men renewed the late 18th-century focus on workplace reform. Trade unions had gained legal status in 1824, and laws barring skilled artisans from traveling to the continent had been repealed the following year, signaling more moderate approaches to the control of labor; by Victoria’s ascension, Luddite machine-breaking and the wholesale transportation of convicted working-class leaders to Australia had generally given way to new models of labor organization and protest.

One early approach to labor organization, this one a top-down model that would draw the scorn of Karl Marx at mid-century, was the so-called cooperative socialism of Scottish textile magnate Robert

Owen (1771–1858). Beginning in 1800, Owen used his family wealth to reorganize his cotton factories in New Lanark, Scotland, replacing capitalist competition with mutualist cooperation. He continued to turn a profit even as he rejected the widespread models of early industrial organization that were built on 14-hour days, child labor, and the complete rejection of any type of wage or safety regulations. Instead, he limited working hours and provided health care, leisure activities, pensions, and schools for children. His middle-class competitors snorted over Owen's decision to limit his own profits, while middle-class moralists compared Owenite socialism to atheism and potential revolution. Owen's paternalism proved too suffocating for many workers, but scores of men and women welcomed a less brutal approach to industry. Owenite cooperative socialism, especially its emphasis on mutual self-help, established and retained a strong hold on British working-class loyalty even as it faced competition from the more politically strident Chartist movement of Feargus O'Connor, which emerged in the late 1830s.

O'Connor, a much more galvanic and charismatic leader than Owen, used his considerable journalistic skills to launch the weekly newspaper *The Northern Star*, which became the voice of the British working classes from 1837 through 1852. In it O'Connor critiqued both international politics and domestic policies, articulating the reforms that would become the Six Points of the People's Charter: universal manhood suffrage, annual parliaments, introduction of the secret ballot, an end to property qualifications for MPs, salaries for MPs, and equal electoral districts. After a decade of political, social, and economic activism, Chartists gathered thousands of signatures for these reforms on a series of petitions that were presented to Parliament in 1848, but to no avail. The movement itself eventually fractured over the ways in which to work for change, with groups advocating "moral force"—which included temperance, education, and land reform—or "physical force"—which evoked memories of Luddism and Peterloo. Chartism as a political movement achieved none of its immediate goals, although all of the six points except annual parliaments would eventually be adopted, but it offered an effective and inviting means by which a common working-class identity could be forged, at least among the skilled urban workers of England and Scotland.

Thus, by mid-century working-class culture had emerged as a recognizable economic, political, and social force alongside the equally distinct culture of the middle classes, even as working-class triumphs were limited and efforts at labor organization ignored both women and the unskilled. The shared values of thrift and self-sufficiency,

unironically defined as peculiarly middle class, defused earlier worries that urban labor would inevitably embrace revolution. As a result, the 1867 Reform Bill that extended the vote to most urban and some rural adult males was couched as a recognition that they had “earned” this right in the same way that middle-class men had done in 1832. This broader franchise, ushered in by Conservative prime minister Benjamin Disraeli in a master stroke of political gamesmanship, would force both parties to grapple with voters whose political, social, and economic interests could be deeply in conflict.

RELIGION AND SCIENCE: PARTNERS OR ANTAGONISTS?

The 1867 Reform Bill emerged from the same period of intense cultural and intellectual ferment that had produced a wealth of literary and social critiques, as well as innovations in science and technology. All of these new voices added to the entwined optimism and anxiety of the long 19th century. Worries and self-congratulation often moved in tandem from one cultural moment to another, forming a web in which imperialism and industrial reforms competed for attention with new models of educational organization and increasingly strident feminism. However, no anxieties were more profound than those attached to religion and science, as Charles Darwin’s 1859 *Origin of Species* amplified the already-significant worries of a generation of “honest doubters.”

Anglicanism in England and Wales had cooled again after the warmth of late 18th-century Evangelicalism, even as the movement toward disestablishment—breaking the formal ties of church and state—had fueled some attempts to reinvigorate the church as a state institution. In both parts of the kingdom, the Methodists had gradually broken away from the state church after Wesley’s death in 1791, taking with them an important locus of emotional spirituality. Wales became primarily Methodist; England remained formally Anglican, but new movements emerged within Anglicanism to try to fill that emotional space. One of the most significant, although small in number of adherents, was the Tractarian or Oxford Movement of the 1830s. Tractarians emphasized the importance of ritual and the role of the church as the necessary conduit for Christ’s truth, arguing that a joyful awe was the emotion most appropriate to spirituality. But many viewed the movement as an underhanded way to return the English church to Roman Catholicism, and the formal conversion in 1845 of John Henry Newman, one of the movement’s leaders, only underscored those fears.

By the 1840s the expressive spirituality of the Tractarians had begun to give way to a more careful emphasis on intellectual components of faith. The Victorians called this “earnestness,” by which they meant, in the context of religion, an intellectual understanding of the objects of belief and a thoughtful, rational appreciation of sacred duty. The 1860 publication of *Essays and Reviews*—a volume of essays employing the tools of the so-called new criticism coming out of Germany—introduced many earnest readers to the dangerous pleasures of textual analysis applied to the Bible. One of the authors, Benjamin Jowett, defended the volume as a reasoned reaction against the “abominable system of terrorism” that forbade the discussion of the texts of the Christian religion. In 1862, such discussion became even more heated with the publication of Anglican prelate J. W. Colenso’s *Pentateuch*, in which Colenso, the bishop of Natal, publicly disavowed a literal belief in the scriptures.

The furor caused by these developments was primarily a challenge to the middle classes; religion itself appeared increasingly to be absent in the life of the working classes. A religious census in 1851 revealed that only some 35 percent of those in England and Wales attended a church or Nonconformist chapel, and barely half of those were Anglican; some 70 percent of those nonattenders were from the working classes. (There was no similar census for Scotland or Ireland.) The Anglican Church responded in several ways, both formal and informal, beginning with a vigorous urban building program, since the issue of nonattendance was due in part to lack of accommodation.

Most attempts to reconnect faith to the working classes were launched primarily in London’s East End slums and took a variety of forms. For example, Anglican cleric Frederick Denison Maurice preached the tenets of Christian socialism in the 1850s, attempting to reframe reform away from Marxist revolution and toward a more overt New Testament message. Methodists William and Catherine Booth founded the Salvation Army in 1865, adopting the military markers of flags and uniforms and targeting alcoholics, prostitutes, and the destitute through what William Booth referred to as “The Three Ss”: soup, soap, and salvation. The desire to defuse class conflict through a lived demonstration of faith continued, less successfully, in the university settlement house movement of the 1880s and 1890s, where young men from Oxford and Cambridge Universities lived and worked in London’s East End. The first of these, Toynbee Hall, was established by Samuel Barnett in 1884. None of these efforts turned the tide of working-class religious nonobservance, although they did address many of the immediate needs of the slums and paved the way for a more

institutionalized provision of social work, ranging from health care to legal aid, at the end of the century.

For many, of course, the biggest challenge to the nature of religious authority came not from class antagonism but from scientific authority. Darwin's 1859 *On the Origin of Species, Or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life* compelled most educated men and women to address the questions raised by the theory of evolution by natural selection even if they ultimately rejected the idea. Evolution as a mechanism to explain the extinction of species had been a part of scientific discussion for decades, fueled by the works of Jean Baptiste Lamarck, Robert Chambers, and others. Darwin himself was strongly influenced by the school of geological inquiry called uniformitarianism, which rejected the rapid and extreme changes of the so-called catastrophists and instead emphasized that changes in the earth were slow, gradual, and still perceptible in the contemporary world of the Victorians. Within this geological context, he brought together the Lamarckian emphasis on responses to environmental pressures, the common-sense observation of artificial selection in farming and such hobbies as pigeon breeding, and Malthusian arguments describing the relationships between food supply and population, in order to describe the mechanisms of evolution by natural selection. Natural selection led to the extinction of old and the development of new species, all responding to pressures of the natural world rather than the supernatural hand of God.

Anticipating the religious and scientific objections that his work would provoke, Darwin chose not to publish until the younger naturalist Alfred Russell Wallace began to articulate very similar theories. In *Origin*, Darwin deliberately limited himself to discussions of speciation and extinction rather than addressing the issue of initial creation itself. He deferred entirely the question of man's own evolution until the 1871 *Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex*, despite the clear implications of his theories.

Reaction was swift and intense and claimed many victims: one of the most well known was the esteemed naturalist Philip Henry Gosse, whose 1857 *Omphalos* argued that God had created Adam with an umbilicus and had also planted false evidence of dinosaurs in the fossil record in order to test the Christian faithful. From a religious perspective, it was feared that "our moral sense will turn out to be a mere developed instinct . . . and the hope of a future life [will be revealed as] pleasurable daydreams invented for the good of society."¹ At the 1860 meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, Bishop Samuel Wilberforce—son of Evangelical William

Wilberforce—attempted to slay the Darwinians with satire, asking whether it was through his grandfather or his grandmother that Darwin's representative Thomas Huxley claimed to be descended from a primate.

Scientific objections focused on the problems of "intermediate" characteristics—what good was half a wing, and how would natural selection favor the precursor of an eye or another similarly complex organ?—as well as the great span of years necessary for the evolution of one species into another entirely different species. Since the age of the earth was generally agreed to be only about 6,000 years, this objection was particularly serious. So also was the lack of any clear understanding about the mechanisms of heredity itself. Despite these and other theoretical gaps, young and ardent scientists like Huxley took up the cudgels for this new theory, and even those who found Darwin's theories troubling on moral or theological grounds had to grapple with the scientific questions raised by the reclusive scientist.

Darwin's theory of natural selection was immediately appropriated by other fields, most noticeably the infant field of sociology, where Herbert Spencer coined the phrase "survival of the fittest" and applied it to competition among the societies of Europe and the non-European world, as well as to individuals within society. His followers would claim that the government provision of assistance to the poor or the poorly educated stood in the way of this "survival of the fittest" and that the fitting of a society to survive and to conquer was best accomplished by a strictly hands-off government. Others would take the opposite tack, echoing the philosophical work of John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty* and claiming that "survival of the fittest" meant "fitting the most to survive." These men and women, led by Huxley, argued instead that the government had an obligation to remove impediments to success and perhaps even to provide some assistance in the form of education, child health care, municipal services, and the like.

THE EXPANSION OF THE EMPIRE

In this latter capacity, the rhetoric of reformers borrowed not only from Darwin and Spencer but also from the vast literature of empire, as the slums of the inner cities were increasingly compared to the outposts of Asia and Africa and, alas, to the problematic next-door neighbors, the Irish, who were invariably consigned to subhuman status in discussions of culture and improvement. (The London Zoo in 1892 named its chimpanzee "Paddy," reflecting the English popular press's tendency to draw the Irish with ape-like features.) By the 1860s, the

British Empire had become not only more vast but exponentially more complex than its 17th- and 18th-century precursors. The empire of the high Victorian period continued to be driven by economics, with Britain importing most of its raw materials (including food) and exporting its finished goods, especially in metals and textiles. But the relatively simple equation of supply and demand was complicated by moral and cultural imperatives, so that both colonies and spheres of economic influence also became sites for a particular type of religious Evangelicalism. Salvation included soap as well as scripture; civilization depended on commerce as well as Christianity.

British colonies and spheres of influence spanned the globe and fell into three basic categories: colonies of settlement, colonies of direct rule, and areas of “informal empire.” All three categories were expected to be economically self-sufficient, which translated not only to participation in the web of British global trade but also to heavy local taxation that was used to pay for administrators and infrastructure.

However, only the colonies of settlement were envisioned as growing into eventual self-rule. These colonies—Canada, South Africa, Australia, and a few others that would form the basis of the British Commonwealth in the 20th century—were settled by white Britons, who made a new homeland in the image of the old home: most domestic decision-making would devolve to the colonists themselves, with the British Parliament and Whitehall making decisions about foreign policy and trade. The example of America, which had gradually established a warm relationship with Britain, demonstrated that a formal break between colony and colonizer did not mean an end to shared ties of economics, kinship, and culture.

The largest group of colonies were those of direct rule, where white British leadership wielded direct and sometimes brutal political, social, and economic power over nonwhite majorities. Few Britons claimed the settlements in northern and southern Africa and Southeast Asia might eventually evolve into self-governing regions; instead, the “race science” that was intensified through the work of Darwin and Spencer taught that nonwhites would never be capable of autonomy but only of hard work under constant supervision.

The third category of empire was the informal empire, where Britain’s economic and cultural powers were not embedded within formal political structures but remained in the realm of “influence.” These areas of China, the east and west African coasts, and parts of the East Indies were subject to trading agreements that often included noneconomic pressures and sanctions that might well be imposed by force:

the Opium Wars (1839–1842 and 1856–1860), for example, violently opened up China to Indian opium in order to secure the trade in tea, but China was never formally subjugated within the British Empire.

India, which eventually became the “jewel in the crown of empire,” combined degrees of all three types of administrative systems, beginning as a trade partner with the East India Company in 1601. Over the next two centuries the private company expanded its holdings, forming an increasingly important part of England’s trade and requiring a growing presence of English military officers and administrators to manage and protect its warehouses and agents. The steady return of wealthy merchants to England sparked public interest in the subcontinent, and the missionary impulse of many readers was heightened by newspaper stories detailing the repellent practices of thuggery (gang murders by secret societies) and suttee or sati (the ritual self-immolation of high-caste Hindu widows). By mid-century, the gradual elimination of stamp and paper taxes had ushered in a cheap press that could deliver seductive stories of these exotic dangers to readers at every level of educational competence. Vigorous attempts to eliminate such cultural practices were cheered by Britons at home, whose views of empire were framed by the conviction that Western European patterns of family and labor were self-evidently superior to those in foreign lands. British commerce, administration, and missionary work would speed the evolution from savagery to civilization that 19th-century anthropologists and sociologists claimed was inevitable.

Domestic pressures to “fix” India provided a backdrop for increasingly ruthless political intervention. Native princes were tied to the East India Company by a variety of client relationships, and by mid-century outright annexation of territories was becoming common, sometimes preceded by forcible deposition of the hereditary or elected prince. In 1857 these and other issues ignited a violent rebellion in Bengal (referred to by the British army as the Sepoy Mutiny and by native Indians as the Indian Rebellion) when native enlisted men in the Indian Army protested the use of animal fat to grease bullet cartridges. Hindu soldiers were asked to defile themselves with beef fat and Muslim soldiers with pork fat. Despite the army’s quick substitution of different types of cartridges, the uprising spread throughout the Ganges Valley. Savage massacres of civilians were carried out by both sides in the conflict, with one of the most notorious being the slaughter of 200 British women and children at Cawnpore. In an age where the telegraph allowed immediate newspaper coverage of international events—the Crimean War of 1854 had seen the first major

international use of the telegraph and of what today would be called “embedded” journalists—news of these disasters animated the British public and worsened Whitehall’s problems in dealing with the uprising. British troops were sent in great numbers to quell the revolts, and in 1858 control of the subcontinent was formally taken out of the hands of the East India Company and placed under the newly formed India Board, destroying any hope of a prompt transition to self-rule. Victoria added “Empress of India” to her titles in 1876.

Indeed, the newspaper-reading public was an increasingly active part of imperial decision-making. In Jamaica, for example, Governor Edward Eyre brutally suppressed a rebellion by the descendants of former slaves in 1865. The episode resulted in a formal investigation into Eyre’s actions, particularly his suspension of the rule of law for native Jamaican blacks. Public opinion polarized, with pro-Eyre forces including such men of letters as Thomas Carlyle, Charles Dickens, and Alfred Tennyson; anti-Eyre forces included Charles Darwin, Thomas Huxley, Herbert Spencer, John Stuart Mill, and other writers and thinkers associated with economics and the sciences. The anti-Eyre forces tried without success for five years to bring the governor, now retired, to trial. The entire episode renewed discussions about colonial policy, the problems of post-slavery economies, social and legal attitudes toward blacks, and the government’s use of often brutal force against nonwhites—all of which were debated in the newspaper press.

Similarly, the expansion of the British presence in Africa was carried out under the critical eye of the reading public, which applauded the acquisition of the French-built Suez Canal in 1875 and then control over Egypt in 1882. Readers also avidly followed the fortunes of South African miners as diamonds and gold were discovered in Cape Town and, even more plentifully, in the neighboring Boer territories established by descendants of Dutch settlers. A massacre of native Zulus in 1879 was followed by a brief war with the Boers in 1880 and then again in 1899–1902, all reported at length in the daily and Sunday papers.

This second war tapped anew the strident patriotism—“jingoism”—that had first emerged in the 1870s. But it also invited harsh criticism of military leadership, as a formal “scorched earth” policy resulted in the destruction of farmlands and homesteads. Some 50,000 Boers and black Africans were captured, with the men executed or deported and the women and children herded into often fatally unsanitary concentration camps, where journalists and social investigators documented disease and death for readers around the world. More than 28,000 white Britons were also injured or killed. The war cost several hundred million pounds to prosecute and to finally win and helped polarize

public opinion around imperial policy. Among the unintended consequences, it also focused attention on problems of public health in Britain's cities, where countless potential conscripts into the imperial forces were turned away after failing the army physical.

REFORM AND SUFFRAGE IN THE LATER VICTORIAN PERIOD

Municipal reforms had been haphazard and incomplete before about 1850, as civic leaders struggled to balance the overwhelming problems of hygiene, crime, and disease with the jealously guarded independence of the British householder. Early reformer Edwin Chadwick used his successes in the New Poor Law of 1834 to expand his portfolio, but his 1850s efforts to introduce sanitary reform into London by piping sewage into the River Thames were both ham-fisted and ineffective. Indeed, Victorian reformers were always calculating the social as well as the economic costs of reforms: for example, the introduction of mandatory smallpox vaccines in 1853 sparked fears of deliberate infection of the working classes, while programs like Dr. John Thomas Barnardo's for the care of slum children, sometimes through their forcible relocation to the colonies, had to contend with suspicions that the rights of families were being deliberately destroyed.

Other efforts were more obviously beneficial, especially those aimed at providing police protection, establishing local medical officers, removing the "nuisances" of human and animal excrement from town and city streets, and replacing unventilated back-to-back housing units with more and healthier dwellings. Even these successes, however, were met with outrage from ratepayers, who were often slow to see that such necessary reforms could not be undertaken by the sturdy self-improving individual but could only come through centralized programs of change. Similar problems dogged the eventual creation of a program of national elementary education in 1870: some reformers warned that an uneducated working-class electorate would be overwhelmingly dangerous, while others lamented the passing of educational responsibilities from church and family into the hands of an unfeeling bureaucracy. Anguish over inroads into family autonomy also accompanied legislative proposals for such reforms as maternity leave for factory women and the provision of milk to poor infants and children.

Increasingly, however, voices were raised in favor of municipal reforms as a form of Christian service—Birmingham's so-called civic gospel was perhaps the most successful in this regard—or as a

necessary domestic adjunct to the civilizing mission of empire. By the end of the century, the work of men like Charles Booth and Seebohm Rowntree in demonstrating the endemic problems of chronic urban poverty found more receptive ears. Booth's 1899 study of London, and Rowntree's study of York two years later, showed that what Rowntree called "primary poverty" was due not to immorality and vice but rather to low wages, poor housing, and other institutional impediments to success. This slow reorientation was a remarkable change, long in coming, that would set the stage for widespread government activism after Victoria.

The shift in the nature of municipal responsibility had widespread effects, many of them initially unforeseen. Perhaps one of the most far-reaching results of increased governmental responsibility was to place more power in the hands of middle- and upper-class women. Single-women ratepayers gained the municipal vote in 1869, including the right to vote for and eventually stand for school board, vestry, and poor law board. The first woman Poor Law Guardian was elected in 1875. This limited extension of the local franchise to women was controversial. It appeared a first step toward an inevitable extension of the parliamentary franchise, and while many observers argued that women's "natural" nurturing capabilities made them ideal participants in charity and education, they often simultaneously claimed that women lacked the rational faculties necessary to decide national issues of economics and empire.

Other rights for women were slow to come. For most of the century, married women in England were viewed as having no separate legal existence apart from their husbands (in contrast to Scotland, where married women enjoyed significantly greater legal independence). This led inevitably to grievous personal disasters such as that recounted by author Caroline Norton, whose rakish husband beat her, appropriated her income, accused her of infidelity, and refused her access to her young sons, even when one lay dying. Norton's passionate essays, including a public appeal to Queen Victoria on behalf of all English women, helped spur such changes as the Custody of Infants Act of 1839, which gave mothers the right to request custody of children up to age seven, and the Married Women's Property Acts of 1870, 1882, and 1893, which expanded the control married women retained over any property they brought to marriage and allowed wives access to the money they earned.

Professional gains were as difficult. The establishment of teachers' training colleges for women, as well as schools and institutions to

educate governesses and nurses, sparked conversations over the so-called redundant woman, the unmarried woman who would have to support herself. Working-class single women could be deployed to the colonies, but middle-class women were less willing to relocate, leading to public discussions over the awkwardly worded query, “what shall we do with our old maids?”² These women could attend classes at colleges and universities by 1849, when Bedford College opened within the University of London, but they were not permitted to sit for matriculation examinations until 1863; they were not admitted into medical schools until 1869. Sophia Jex-Blake founded the London School of Medicine for Women in 1874 and a medical school for women in Edinburgh in 1886. Only in 1876 were women hired as bank clerks for the first time, a major step into what would become white-collar work. And not until 1881 were women admitted as clerks in the civil service, which had undergone a major reorganization at mid-century when examinations replaced patronage as the primary criterion for admission.

The question of the national franchise continued to surface at regular intervals after John Stuart Mill’s failed mid-century attempt to extend the vote to all adults, male and female. The 1884 Reform Act built on the 1867 Act, refusing to extend the vote to women but enfranchising almost all adult males. The 1884 Act also renewed the efforts of parties specifically aimed at working-class men and their interests. Liberals and trade unionists had come together in the so-called Lib-Lab alliance in the 1870s to elect working-class MPs; by 1880, as the expansion of the franchise became increasingly more likely, new parties and factions emerged. H. M. Hyndman’s 1881 Social Democratic Federation adopted an overtly Marxist socialism, while the Fabian Society, founded in 1884, rejected the necessity of a Marxist revolution and instead advocated for a gradualist approach toward socialism. Fabians, whose members included Sydney and Beatrice Webb, generally remained under the Liberal umbrella and embarked on an extensive program of social reforms, such as revisions to the Poor Law (1905), the Old Age Pensions Act (1908), and the National Insurance Act (1911). In 1885, the Socialist League split off from the Social Democratic Foundation, spinning ever further into anarchism until it dissolved in 1901. Finally, in 1893, the Independent Labour Party (ILP) emerged as a broad umbrella for a variety of approaches to working-class reforms, ranging from Marxist revolution to Fabian gradualism to the threads of temperance, Methodism, and nationalism that continued to attract new voters.

These varieties of socialism represented a powerful adjunct to the renewed power of the labor unions. By the 1850s, industrywide unions—sometimes called “New Model Unionism”—began to replace the completely autonomous local unions that had grown up among the skilled trades of engineering and carpentry. In 1868 one attempt to consolidate labor across—not just within—industry resulted in the formation of the Trades Union Congress (TUC), which began in the 1870s to lobby Parliament for pro-labor legislation. Semiskilled and unskilled workers, including women, were slowly brought into the larger fold of unionized workers. The ILP provided a political voice for the workers of these unions, and both the TUC, with 1 million members by the turn of the century, and the ILP worked to establish the first formal Labour Party in 1903. Working-class voters responded energetically to a party focused specifically on their needs, although some workers continued to privilege the promises of empire, voting either for the Conservatives or the new Liberal Unionists, formed by Joseph Chamberlain in 1886 to quash Home Rule for Ireland. The Liberal Party found itself in decline.

None of these new options, however, made electoral space for women, who continued to participate as voters and leaders at the municipal level but were barred from the parliamentary vote. By the last decades of the century, arguments for and against the extension of this franchise had become noticeably shrill. The anti-suffrage camp included men who claimed women were simply incapable of appreciating the complex issues involved in governing an empire that stretched around the world. Some, like Herbert Spencer, argued that women’s intellectual development would always come at the expense of their ability to nurture children and that women’s public involvement would inevitably lead to the decline of the race, a fear shared by many in an age of empire. Many women also took an anti-suffrage position, rejecting what they depicted as the violent, chaotic, and ugly world of international politics. Some anti-suffragists also argued that influence within the family and the social circle remained more powerful than a direct political voice and that they would lose more than they would gain with suffrage. In 1897 Millicent Fawcett founded the National Union of Women’s Suffrage Societies to amalgamate the efforts of the various smaller organizations working for the parliamentary vote for women. Pro-suffrage groups advocating the use of violence, such as the suffragettes—formally the Women’s Social and Political Union, founded by Emmeline Pankhurst and her daughter Christabel in 1903—received more press than less-militant organizations but arguably delayed the adoption of female suffrage by a number of years.

Other “women’s issues” dividing educated society in the late Victorian period included debates over social and sexual purity, represented in various ways by the campaigns to repeal the 1860s Contagious Diseases Acts (requiring the registration and forcible physical examination of female prostitutes as a way to control the spread of venereal disease) and to raise the age of sexual consent from 13 to 16. Anxieties about prostitution and sexual predators were linked specifically to poverty during the Jack the Ripper murders in 1888, even as charges of vice and sexual immorality against men of the upper classes continued to resonate throughout the debates over marriage and women’s independence. Feminists were also particularly active in a number of other broad social movements, such as the anti-vivisectionist campaigns led by Frances Power Cobbe and the late-century growth of spiritualism and other alternatives to traditional religious practice. As always, the wars of the sexes and of the generations provided ample material for novelists and essayists: Eliza Lynn Linton satirized the rebellious mid-Victorian girl as “The Girl of The Period” in 1868, while Sarah Grande painted a sympathetic portrait of her descendant, the “New Woman,” in her 1893 novel *The Heavenly Twins*.

VICTORIAN ART AND LITERATURE

These controversies over religion and science, suffrage and reform were widely read in an era of cheap periodicals. The 19th century was punctuated by the emergence of an enormous reading public—perhaps better characterized as several reading publics, because by the end of Victoria’s reign there were many groups of readers, all demanding inexpensive and accessible newspapers and books. Many of the “men of letters” of the early and middle parts of the century occupied a particularly powerful position in society, providing an important set of guidelines for the moral and intellectual development of the middle classes. Essayists like John Ruskin and Thomas Carlyle, novelists like Charles Dickens and Elizabeth Gaskell, and poets like Alfred Tennyson and Robert Browning used their skills to preach and teach. And to entertain: the serialized novel made famous by writers like Dickens reached unprecedented numbers of readers, many of whom waited breathlessly for the next month’s installment of *The Old Curiosity Shop* to find out if Little Nell really did die. New genres emerged, including that of detective fiction, introduced by Wilkie Collins and made internationally famous with Arthur Conan Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes stories. Women became the primary novel readers of the period, but men also consumed fiction along with the more serious essays and political writings that filled the pages of countless periodicals.

For a brief few decades at mid-century, writers and essayists could court a unified reading public: such digests of news and opinion as *Fraser's*, the *Edinburgh Review*, the *Quarterly Review*, and the *Foreign and Quarterly Review* positioned themselves across the political spectrum but shared a conviction that the intelligent upper-middle-class reader was key to the success of a modern constitutional monarchy. Less lofty fare reached the balance of the middle and working classes: Dickens's *Household Words* was one of dozens of journals aimed at wives and families, and there were magazines for such disparate groups as factory girls, mission workers, boot and shoe manufacturers, self-improving artisans who sought advice on debating and lecture clubs, and horse-race aficionados. Indeed, by the last third of the century, so many groups of readers could demand material specific to their own narrow interests that the cultural and moral powers of the mid-century men of letters had begun to wane. The unified voice of these "preachers and teachers" was no longer able to reach the many different consumers of culture who now flocked to art museums, libraries, local parks, zoos, and music halls. The illusion of a single public was slow to fade, however, and journalists and novelists continued to celebrate or to lament the power of public opinion as an instrument of change or stasis.

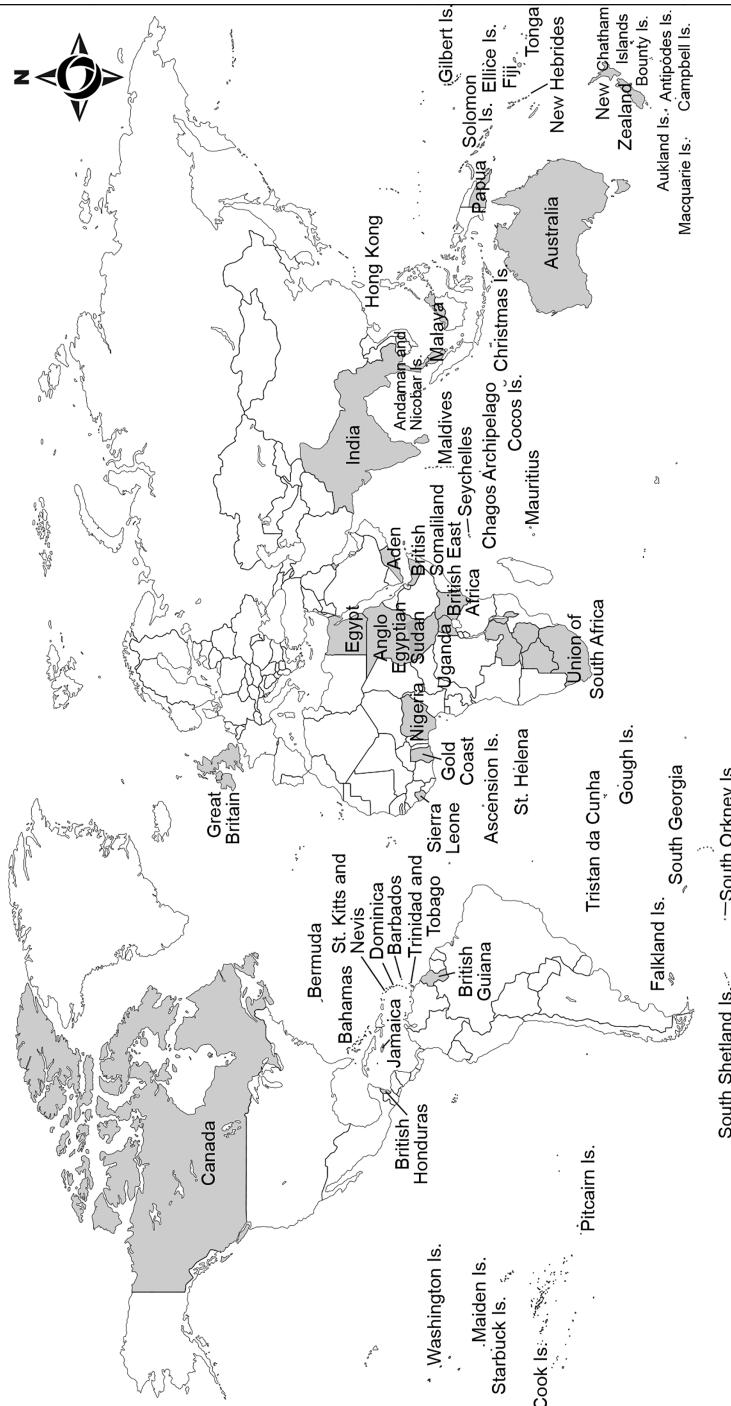
In the visual arts and architecture, the long 19th century witnessed a variety of responses to the often-confusing developments of industry and society. Many early Victorian public buildings, such as train stations and city halls, were often elaborately beautiful, designed to provide the common man and woman with an uplifting visual focus in an otherwise bleak and monotonously redbrick urban landscape. Men like William Morris and his fellow mid-century Pre-Raphaelites took this a step further, arguing that the design of furniture, wallpaper, and other household objects should reflect a soul-nourishing beauty that was lacking in mass-produced goods but that could be reclaimed through a return to handicrafts and a certain kind of taste in decorative objects. The Aesthetic movement of the 1870s and 1880s, whose members included Walter Pater and Oscar Wilde, similarly represented arts and literature as a higher kind of reality and reviled middle-class morality and traditional art as vulgar, boring, bourgeois, and hypocritical. The Aesthetics gave way, in turn, to the Decadents of the so-called Naughty Nineties or Yellow Nineties, a group of artists and writers who courted excess in their personal lives and who conveyed their own experiences of absinthe, sexual misbehavior, and ennui through works that were designed to deliberately shock their audiences at the fin de siècle.

By the time of Victoria's death, her subjects were undeniably modern: they had experienced jarring new political and economic developments, accepted the often-conflicting ideologies supporting the largest empire in the world, and grown to expect unprecedented developments in technology and convenience. The political, social, and sexual norms of 1837 were transformed by 1901 into new conceptions of class, race, and gender that would have been largely unimaginable to the first Victorians. The queen had ruled over three generations of Britons, providing a much-needed source of continuity in a period of vast change. Yet by the turn of the century, many Britons were ready for something new. Victoria's son, King Edward, would preside over the coming of that new world.

NOTES

1. *Edinburgh Review* 134 (1871), pp. 195–196, quoted in Alvar Ellegård, *Darwin and the General Reader: The Reception of Darwin's Theory of Evolution in the British Periodical Press, 1859–1872*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), p. 100.
2. This was the title of an 1862 article by mid-century feminist reformer Frances Power Cobbe; it originally appeared in *Fraser's Magazine* (November 1862) and was later reprinted in Cobbe's *Essays on the Pursuits of Women* (London, 1863).

BRITISH EMPIRE, 1914



8

A New Century: Britain under Edward VII and George V

A FRESH START?

When Victoria died in 1901, her 59-year-old son Bertie came to the throne as Edward VII (1901–1910). Many welcomed the change. As with Elizabeth I, Victoria's reign had grown old and stale, and her death appeared to signal a fresh start in a fresh century. Edward, known facetiously as "Edward the caresser" for his notorious love life and equally well known for his smoking, gambling, and horse racing, represented a clear departure from the earnest and eventually rather stodgy reign of his mother, but he was not the disastrous monarch that some had feared. Instead, as the "Uncle of Europe," he brought a continental flair to the monarchy and also expanded diplomatic ties by becoming the first British monarch to visit Russia and Sweden. Like his mother, Edward presided over an empire that took on his name. The Edwardian era appears in retrospect as an interlude of peace and prosperity, an Indian summer before the outbreak of the Great War in

1914. In truth, however, there were crises aplenty. Many of these crises did not fully erupt until after Edward's son George took the throne in 1910, but their roots can be firmly traced back to the first decade of the new century.

ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CRISES

A new king did not mean a reorientation of class relations. The economic challenges of the new century were visible in the growing gulf between labor and management, a gulf that had significantly increased with the reorganization of industry that began in the depression of the 1870s. Wages consistently fell during this period, and the simultaneous drop in the price of basic foodstuffs did not offset the overall sense that workers were losing. Consolidations in industry resulted in larger factories and industrial centers, leading in turn to more formal relationships between worker and employer that were increasingly mediated through labor unions. The challenges of women's labor finally began to attract organizers: Emma Paterson founded the Women's Trade Union League and the National Association of Working Women in 1874 to encourage women workers to combine. Early women's unions included organizations for bookbinders and upholsterers, but long-term success was uneven since women workers entered and left the workplace several times over their lives, depending on the obligations of family life. For men, by the 1890s unions had emerged to protect all workers within an industry, not just the skilled male artisan, in a development known as New Unionism. The Dockworkers Union—formally known as the Dock, Wharf, Riverside and General Labourers Union—was an early example of this more inclusive approach, evolving out of a strike in August 1899 that eventually involved over 130,000 men. Other New Unions included organizations for coalminers and gasworkers.

Inevitably, these larger and more powerful unions supplemented their workplace activism with political activism, reflected in the development of independent political parties. The Scottish Labour Party (founded 1892) sent Keir Hardie to Parliament in 1892 before it became part of the larger Independent Labour Party (ILP). Hardie also presided over the establishment in 1900 of the Labour Representation Committee (LRC), which worked with the Liberal Party in 1900 to elect two Labour MPs to Parliament.

This new working-class activism, combining as it did both workplace organization and deliberate political action, met with strong resistance. Within a year of its founding, the LRC was embroiled in

a political battle over trade union liability, in the Taff-Vale crisis of 1901–1902. Taff-Vale, a large Welsh railway concern, had sued the railway union for losses suffered during a legal strike, and the courts in 1902 awarded the company £23,000 in damages. Although this court decision did not eliminate the legal right of unions to strike, in its practical effects it did just that; with legal costs, the union paid £42,000, a sum not even the largest unions could risk. Workers and union leaders were outraged, in part because the company had appealed lower-court decisions against them up to the House of Lords, and the Lords' decision appeared to be motivated primarily by class bias.

The immediate result of this action was increased support by many unions for the LRC, which was rechristened the modern Labour Party in 1903. In 1906, due in part to the financial and organizational support of unions working with the Labour Party, 30 Labour MPs were returned to Parliament. This did not signify complete agreement between workers and the Labour Party, however; some union representatives preferred the flexibility of the established Lib-Lab (Liberal-Labour) alliance and resented the assumption that all political representation for workers must come solely through the new Labour Party, which was suspected of too-close ties to socialist doctrine. In 1907, district secretary Walter Osborne sued his own union, the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants, arguing that union rules did not specifically designate union dues for any political activity and thus such usage was illegal unless the individual member opted in. Because MPs were unsalaried, and would remain so until 1911, a judgment for Osborne would, in effect, cripple the ability of the Labour Party to support its candidates both during and after elections. The ruling in Osborne's favor, like the Taff-Vale case, was appealed up to the House of Lords; it would not be overturned until 1913, when the Trade Union Act granted unions the legal right to fund political activities through voluntary contributions by members, thereby acknowledging the connection between unions and political parties.

Both the Taff-Vale and the Osborne cases sent a clear message to the working classes. In response, and against the backdrop of New Unionism, union membership more than doubled, from 2 million in 1901 to 4.1 million in 1913. Industrywide strikes became the norm after the 1906 Trade Disputes Act guaranteed unions the right to strike. In 1908, for instance, more time was lost from strikes than had been lost in the previous 10 years combined, and in 1911 the entire railway union went on strike. The government had given the Board of Trade the power and responsibility to mediate trade disputes, and these efforts were relatively successful during the first decade of the century. After 1911,

however, the government increasingly resorted to military force as one of its negotiating tools. Unions themselves responded by renewing the idea of a national union of all workers as the obvious way to maximize the power of the worker. The first attempt at this was the triple alliance of miners, railway workers, and transport workers proposed in 1914 and eventually ratified in 1915. The railway contract was to expire in December 1914, and many feared that the new alliance would take this opportunity to flex its muscle, effectively shutting down the country. Only the outbreak of war averted this disaster.

The Taff-Vale and Osborne cases were played out against a transfer of power from Conservative to Liberal, a shift in political leadership that was a result of significant missteps by the Conservatives under Robert Gascoyne Cecil, the Marquess of Salisbury (prime minister from 1895 through 1902), and Arthur Balfour (prime minister from 1902 through 1905). The Liberals, still smarting from the departure of Liberal Unionists under Joseph Chamberlain in 1886, had observed with dismay the coalition between their two opponent parties in 1895. The alliance of Conservatives and Liberal Unionists, known generally as the Unionist coalition, led to a sweeping victory in the so-called Khaki election of 1900, where the primary campaign issue was the Boer War. However, this victory ushered in a set of serious domestic crises.

The first crisis was over control of education. The Education Act of 1870 had mandated elementary education in England and Wales, placing it under the control of newly established local school boards which could build new schools or fund existing church schools. In Wales, this act marked a significant attack on the Welsh language, as all elementary schooling had to be provided in English. (A similar act was passed in Scotland in 1872.) Subsequent education acts made this schooling both compulsory and free. Control over these schools, which were mandated to include some nonsectarian religious instruction during each day, became a locus of political activism especially among women and non-Anglicans, and many school boards took advantage of the later acts to organize education for children over 12 in what were called "higher-grade schools." The Education Act of 1902, however, placed elementary schools under the control of borough or county councils called Local Education Authorities, many of which worked to reintroduce a more Anglican orientation to religious instruction. The bill had the practical effect of reducing the power of local Nonconformist school boards and those others who sought the end to religious instruction in the schools. The Licensing Act of 1904 similarly outraged Nonconformists, who had expected the Conservative government to limit

the number of public houses and who were deeply troubled that the act instead increased taxes on drink licenses. It appeared that the government preferred to increase its income from the drink trade rather than to try to curb abuses of alcohol.

Other divisive battles followed. Liberals remained committed to free trade, but a growing Conservative faction within the Unionist coalition began to argue passionately for protectionist tariffs. They saw such economic policies as the only means to preserve the empire and to protect the British economy against the industrial wizardry of both Germany and the United States, neither of which was saddled with the expensive burden of an aging manufacturing base. Among their demands was a customs union that would link the raw materials of the colonies to the manufactured goods of the home country. They also campaigned for tariffs on imported goods, including food. These pro-tariff voices claimed that the increasing burden of “civilizing” natives in Asia and Africa required new sources of income, as did the level of economic planning that was Britain’s only hope in the renewed race for industrial supremacy. The anti-tariff Liberals countered that such tariffs would simply reimpose the burden on the common man that had been lifted when the Corn Laws had been repealed in 1846, a message that was represented by the slogan “Big Loaf, Little Loaf” during election debates. In the months before the 1906 general election, the informal Lib-Lab coalition painted the Conservative “little loaf” position as a sure path to higher bread prices, while the Liberal “big loaf” position was portrayed as guaranteeing lower food costs in an atmosphere of free trade. Conservatives were also excoriated for supporting the importation of Chinese indentured laborers into South Africa, where they were perceived as taking jobs from potential working-class British emigrants, as well as for the war debt that lingered four years after the Boer War.

The combination of Nonconformist dismay over education and drink, working-class economic and political impatience, and a widespread moral revulsion over the place of indentured servitude in empire led to a stinging defeat for the Conservative-Union coalition, as the Liberals under Henry Campbell-Bannerman easily rode to victory. The issue of tariffs had already become so divisive within the Unionist coalition that Conservative prime minister Arthur Balfour resigned in 1905, hoping that his Liberal counterpart, Henry Campbell-Bannerman, would be unable to form a government and would have to call an early election. Campbell-Bannerman was successful, however, and led as minority prime minister until the scheduled 1906 elections ushered Liberals into office.

LIBERAL VICTORY AND THE CONSTITUTIONAL CRISIS OF 1909–1911

The Liberals, under the leadership of Campbell-Bannerman (1905–1908) and then H. H. Asquith (1908–1916), introduced a wide program of social reforms, many influenced by continued collaboration with the Fabian Society. These reforms included the Old Age Pensions Act of 1908 and the National Insurance Act of 1911, which included both health insurance and some unemployment insurance. Other reforms included the provision of school meals for poor children, eight-hour workdays, and the Trade Disputes Act of 1906, which protected union funds against claims for damages like those awarded in Taff-Vale.

These reforms were popular with many voters but raised the hackles of Conservatives and most members of the House of Lords, and the friction over funding these programs came to a head in 1909 when the House of Lords exercised its traditional veto powers for the first time in two decades. Chancellor of the Exchequer David Lloyd George proposed a so-called People's Budget that would fund the pensions act and other social reform programs as well as new military battleships, known as dreadnoughts. The proposed budget rested on a "supertax" on incomes over £5,000, a duty on undeveloped land, and a capital gains tax on all land transactions. The Lords saw this as a renewed and fatal attack on the landowning gentry and aristocracy and blocked the bill. Lloyd George went on the offensive, arguing that no country could "permanently afford to have quartered upon its revenue a class which declines to do the duty which it was called upon to perform" and also that "a fully-equipped duke costs as much to keep up as two dreadnoughts, and dukes are just as great a terror and they last longer."¹ King Edward died in the midst of this battle and his son, George V (1910–1936), came to power in a crisis that appeared to threaten the stability of the nation, in which both houses of Parliament appeared to be acting out of entrenched self-interest: the Lords to protect their ancient privileges and the Commons to establish with finality their claims to all parliamentary power. The proposed reforms—including the military expenditures—were popular but expensive, and Conservatives rejected national insurance in favor of battleships, while Liberals and Labour argued that pensions and insurance had been earned through the brutal exploitation of workers and were more important to the health of the nation than dreadnoughts.

The new monarch eventually threatened to end the stalemate by using his royal prerogative to create new peers who would be selected for their support of the budget bill, so that no veto would be possible.

In 1911 a compromise was reached. The Commons could pass any money bill without the formal assent of the Lords, so there would be no future risk of a veto. The Commons could also override any veto on any bill by the House of Lords after two years. In return, there was a pledge that no new Lords would be created and that the existing powers of the aristocracy would remain intact. The Liberal social welfare programs, many of them badly needed, were funded.

THE CONTINUING ISSUE OF FEMALE SUFFRAGE

King George faced another potentially disastrous crisis in the shape of a more militant women's suffrage movement than his grandmother had disapprovingly ignored. By the 1910s, the movement had fractured into several smaller groups with widely varying approaches to the great question of whether women should have the parliamentary vote. By the turn of the century most women and many men in the middle classes had come to support higher education and increased responsibilities for women, and the expansion of the municipal franchise to women ratepayers reflected this support.

However, the question of whether women were fit by nature to make decisions about empire and other national issues continued to divide both men and women. Generally, the Conservative Party opposed the issue of women's suffrage with one voice. Labour largely ignored the issue by arguing that the problem of the female franchise was less pressing than the terribly troubling relations between labor and industry. Liberals tended to be painfully divided, and it was under the auspices of a Liberal government that the so-called Cat and Mouse Act was passed in 1913, pleasing no one and leaving the Liberals open to sharp public criticism.

Formally the Prisoners' Temporary Discharge for Ill-Health Act, the Cat and Mouse Act was clearly aimed at Emmeline Pankhurst's militant suffragettes, whose use of the hunger strike while in prison riveted the attention of the newspaper-reading public. Forced feeding of these prisoners made prison officials look deliberately cruel, as inflexible feeding tubes caused significant internal injuries and even death. The insertion of such tubes also clearly violated the personal integrity of the individual, a cause held dear by Liberals and Conservatives alike. The Liberal government, hoping to divert the public's attention to less emotional matters, used the Cat and Mouse Act to release prisoners and then rearrest them after they had regained their health. Predictably, however, the act was a public relations disaster, and by the eve of the Great War many felt that this issue, like the problems of trade and industry, would bring the nation to revolution.

IRELAND AND HOME RULE

A final deeply divisive issue colored the last years leading up to World War I, and that was the recurring question of Home Rule for Ireland. The problems of Irish landownership had been particularly acute in the period since the Great Famine of 1845–1848. During that period, the population of Ireland declined by 2 million—half through death by starvation and illness, half through emigration. Whitehall initially failed to act, arguing that a free-trade system would right itself; Irish grain, livestock, and other food supplies were exported in accordance with existing *laissez-faire* economic policies and trade agreements. Even after public works projects were initiated, they were so incomplete and poorly administered that they did little to stem the tide of disaster; this was especially the case in rural Gaelic-speaking areas, where whole villages were wiped out and Gaelic culture and language declined precipitously as a result. In the immediate aftermath of the famine, mass evictions worsened the problems of a landownership system that had systematically denied rights and justice to Irish Catholics since the Plantation of Ulster under Oliver Cromwell. By 1900, however, complete Irish independence that included but was not limited to land reform had become the main focus of reformers and agitators.

The move from property ownership to political independence took a number of forms, building on the nationalist movements that emerged after the passage of Catholic emancipation in 1829. By the 1840s, in the increasingly radical atmosphere that also created the Chartist movement, there were a variety of nationalist groups seeking a repeal of the 1801 Act of Union. One of these radical groups was the Young Ireland movement, branching off in 1842 from two iterations of Daniel O'Connell's Repeal Association (founded in 1830, outlawed, and then refounded in 1840). It sought to influence the broadest audience possible, using first the Dublin *Daily Register* and then establishing the Irish weekly *Nation* as a platform for articles on topics ranging from religious freedom to guerilla warfare. In 1848 the movement, inspired both by the suffering of the Great Famine and by the example of political revolution on the continent, launched an unsuccessful rebellion, which resulted in transportation of many of the movement's leaders to Van Dieman's Land (now Tasmania, colonized by the British in 1825 and used as one of the primary penal colonies until the end of transportation in 1853).

Those Young Irelanders who escaped transportation fled the country, many going to the United States. In 1858, they founded the Fenian Brotherhood and then, in some cases, returned to Ireland and began

its sister organization, the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB). The Fenians developed a structure of governance linking the two organizations, and in 1863 they held their first international congress in Chicago. American Fenians amassed weapons and launched a series of raids in British Canada and in New York State, while the IRB worked at home to sow the seeds of an independent democratic Irish republic. With a following of some 50,000–60,000, the sister organizations planned a rising in 1867 that would target Dublin, where the British government was housed in the building known as The Castle. It was, like previous movements, unsuccessful, and the Fenian/IRB devotion to so-called physical force nationalism alienated many.

The failed uprising opened a space for a new organization, the Home Government Association (HGA), founded by Isaac Butt in 1870. The HGA advocated a “moral force” nationalism and quickly emerged as the symbol of Irish Home Rule, working through the existing British Parliament to win acceptance for an independent Irish government that would govern in national matters but work with Westminster on issues pertaining to the entire kingdom. Charles Stewart Parnell assumed leadership of the association in 1881, and for the next decade he presided over an increasingly disciplined parliamentary force of Irish MPs in Westminster under the auspices of the new Irish Parliamentary Party, founded in 1870. Parnell also helped direct pressures for land reform through the Irish Land League (1878–1882), encouraging rural agitation that ranged from withholding rents to property damage.

In 1881, British prime minister William Gladstone, viewing the support of the Irish Parliamentary Party as crucial to the continued success of the Liberal Party, had successfully passed a Land Act that formalized many of the demands of Parnell’s wildly popular Land League. But Gladstone’s attempts to push through bills for Home Rule were less successful. The limited Home Rule Bill of 1886, his first such attempt, failed to pass the House of Commons, where opponents fought it on grounds that ranged from anti-Catholicism (“Home rule is Rome rule”) to empire. Anger over the bill led Joseph Chamberlain to split with the Liberals and found the Liberal Unionist Party. A weakened Liberal Party, alongside the Irish Parliamentary Party, continued to fight for Home Rule, supported by Land Leaguers and others. But in 1890, Parnell’s star dimmed considerably when he was named as co-respondent in his mistress’s divorce, and the Home Rule cause temporarily faltered. Gladstone’s second Home Rule Bill, in 1893, died in the House of Lords.

A third Home Rule Bill was introduced in 1912 by Liberals, who had since 1910 leaned on the Irish Parliamentary Party as an indispensable member of coalition government. Because the Lords’ absolute veto

had been formally limited to two years, any bill blocked by the Lords would be reconsidered after 24 months, and the 1912 Home Rule Bill was introduced with this inevitability in mind. This bill, like the previous two, called for a devolved Irish government but retained Ireland within the Kingdom of Great Britain; it established an Irish parliament in Dublin, reduced the number of Irish MPs sitting in the Westminster parliament, and proposed the end to the hated Castle administration. Vetoed by the Lords in 1912, it was passed in September 1914 as the Government of Ireland Act but was immediately postponed, along with an act to disestablish the Welsh Anglican Church, as every domestic resource was reoriented to the new war.

Home Rule itself was riddled with controversy. Nationalist supporters in Ireland included Sinn Féin (“we ourselves”), which was founded in 1905 by journalist Arthur Griffith, dedicated to nonviolent change and to the establishment of a dual Irish monarchy with one ruler in Ulster and another in Dublin. Sinn Féin focused on both political transformation and the preservation of an autonomous Irish culture. This latter goal was shared by the Gaelic League (founded 1893), which had been formed to preserve the Gaelic language. But the Protestants in Ulster rejected any system that would change their status as a full and complete part of the United Kingdom and came together as the Unionists to fight against change; even a dual system of government was unacceptable, as it would place Ulster under Dublin rule.

Both sides, the Unionists and the Nationalists, formed their own militia groups, with the unionist Ulster Volunteer Force ranged against the nationalist Irish Volunteers. Complicating the already-incendiary situation was the formation in 1913 of the Irish Citizen Army, initially founded to protect striking Irish workers from the Dublin police force but by 1914 openly talking about the formation of a “workers’ republic.” It was regarded with suspicion by many fellow nationalists for its focus on socialist ideology. Unionists and Nationalists were thus both divided within themselves and poised on the brink of civil war even before the formal passing of the Government of Ireland Act, and the postponement of its implementation also merely postponed what looked like imminent and inevitable disaster.

THE GREAT WAR

The Great War became a “world” war almost immediately on its outbreak on August 1, 1914, owing largely to the treaties binding together an imperial Europe. Britain’s own treaties with Belgium and with France led to a declaration of war against Germany on August 4,

a declaration that had broad support even among those who had opposed earlier conflicts like the Boer War. Britain, like every other party to the war, thought that victory would be relatively swift, and thousands of volunteers flocked to join Kitchener's New Army. Even after early disasters at Ypres and Mons, it took some months before the British government—like the Germans and the French—began to appreciate that trench warfare meant a war of attrition.

Trench warfare also meant a war of astonishing casualties in the face of infinitesimal gains. Loos, the Somme, Passchendaele, Gallipoli—all of these names took on meanings of terrible tragedy after calamitous losses to the Germans and their allies. In 1915 a shortage of shells for the heavy guns that defined trench warfare led to the fall of the Liberal government and the formation of a new coalition government under H. H. Asquith. This government introduced conscription in England, Scotland, and Wales to rebuild the military after the loss of more than 350,000 of Kitchener's volunteers at the Somme in 1916. Hundreds of thousands of volunteers and conscripts also came from across the empire.

The war was fought across the globe, with theaters in the Ottoman Empire, the Balkans, and across Eastern Europe providing a tragic counterpoint to the blood-soaked ground in France. Naval warfare supplemented ground attacks, and the new technologies of war included tanks, poison gas, submachine guns, and flamethrowers, all designed to kill on an unprecedented scale. Both sides used aerial bombing, prefiguring the attacks on civilian targets that would help define World War II.

Asquith's first coalition government fell in late 1916 and was replaced by another coalition government, this one led by Liberal David Lloyd George (prime minister 1916–1922), who had been chancellor of the exchequer during the crisis surrounding the 1909 People's Budget and had succeeded Kitchener as secretary of state for war in June 1916. Lloyd George relied heavily on his Conservative allies within the government to deal not only with depleted war resources but also with a variety of domestic challenges. Many of the crisis points leading up to the war—Irish Home Rule, women's suffrage, industrial antagonisms—had been temporarily put to one side in 1914 as most Britons came together to support what was declared to be a just war against an intolerably aggressive "Hun." But when German U-boats sank the large passenger ship *Lusitania* off the coast of Ireland in May 1915, British civilian life was subsumed into total war. The government instituted a program of wage and price controls unimaginable at the height of Victorian free trade; women were hired on a massive scale into traditionally male jobs and volunteered in unprecedented numbers to serve as

nurses and aides in army hospitals; control of essential services, such as the railway, passed into the hands of the government; and food rationing became the norm.

After the initial sense of unity against a common enemy, the tensions of class and gender resurfaced, first as irritants and then as problems to be resolved. The “problem” of Ireland was enormously costly, as we shall see later. In other problem areas, the relations of labor and industry evolved over the course of the war. A variety of laws had restricted labor unions from exercising the right to strike, but a successful coal miners’ strike in 1915 signaled that the demands of wartime production could lead to concessions by industry leaders. Union membership, including organization of previously neglected groups of women and agricultural laborers, nearly doubled between 1913 and 1920. Strikes increased as the war dragged on, with almost two-thirds of the walkouts during the war coming in 1917–1918. Finally, the cause of women’s suffrage remained sidelined, with most suffrage organizations agreeing to cease agitation during the war; this strategy may have helped in the long run, as Lloyd George’s government moved quickly in 1918 to expand the franchise.

The experiences of civilians were difficult, but the suffering of soldiers was almost unimaginable. Letters home, censored by army officials, kept up a cheerful pretense of gamesmanship or “business as usual,” but in memoirs and biographies the details of trench warfare—the rats, the mud, the appalling casualties—emerged to haunt generations of readers. Wilfred Owen, the most famous of Britain’s “War Poets,” wrote home after the battle of the Somme in January 1917, “I can see no excuse for deceiving you about these four days. I have suffered seventh hell. I have not been at the front. I have been in front of it.”² Owen died before he could return home.

In all, British casualties including men from the colonies totaled about 1 million. The wounded accounted for another 2.5 million. The high numbers of the fallen from Australia and New Zealand—primarily at Gallipoli—led to the establishment of April 25 as a national holiday, Anzac Day (after the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps). Canada, South Africa, and India also suffered great losses. The devastation of the war was followed in quick succession by the influenza epidemic of 1918, which carried off between 200,000 and 300,000 men and women—primarily in their thirties and forties—in England and Ireland alone.

The demographic cataclysms of the war and the influenza epidemic would take some time to appreciate, but the wartime casualties by themselves automatically increased the number of unmarried women for the decade to come, as an entire generation of husbands and fathers

simply disappeared into the fog of war. Those soldiers who survived suffered great bitterness on their return home, especially the young men who had been officers during the war, for they found that the “old men” who had managed the war from the safety of an office were unwilling to give up any power to those who had actually suffered in the trenches. Women who had served as nurses and aides shared this bitterness, as most of those at home simply did not want to hear any more about the horrors of the front.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE IRISH FREE STATE

The immediate postwar period was a difficult one, both economically and politically. The “Irish problem” had not been defused but had in fact worsened in the years since the postponement of Home Rule. By 1916, the IRB had determined to take advantage of England’s all-consuming focus on the Great War and claim Irish independence by force. The Easter Rising (also called the Easter Rebellion) of April 24–30 brought together several smaller groups, seized The Castle and other locations in Dublin, and proclaimed an Irish Republic. Because munitions promised by the Germans never arrived, English forces restored order after nearly a week of heavy fighting in Dublin and several other locations. Hundreds of rebels and civilians were killed, thousands were wounded, and some 3,500 were arrested. Most of those arrested were eventually released, but 15 leaders were executed; only one leader, Eamon de Valera, escaped death and was spared execution because of his dual American citizenship.

In the aftermath of the rising, the British government introduced martial law. Nearly 2,000 Irish men were rounded up and sent to prisons or internment camps, often for reasons unrelated to the rising. Atrocities committed by British soldiers—including the murder of suspected nationalist sympathizers—only worsened the situation. Many Dubliners, especially those whose husbands and sons were at the front in France, opposed the nationalists, but a growing number were drawn to Sinn Féin, which had emerged as the leading nationalist organization as sentiments on both sides hardened. It was increasingly clear that a peaceful end to the conflict was impossible, especially when the formal military powers of British soldiers were matched by the Irish Volunteer militia that supported Sinn Féin. In 1917, de Valera was elected president of the nationalist movement and proclaimed the goal of an Irish republic whose citizens would then be able to choose the future form of government—presidential or dual monarchical.



Irish prisoners march along a Dublin quay under a British guard during the bloody, and ultimately unsuccessful, Irish insurrection that began on Easter Monday in 1916. Most of the leaders of the rising were executed, although Eamon de Valera, who suffered imprisonment, would go on to lead the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1922. (Library of Congress)

In early 1918, facing heavy losses, the government in Westminster passed a bill conscripting Irishmen for service but quickly realized that such a process would inflame already-raw tempers. The end of war led to a general election, in which 73 Sinn Féin members and 26 Ulster Unionists were elected to the Parliament in Westminster. The Sinn Féin members refused to take their seats, instead forming a separate Irish parliament—the Dáil Éireann—in January 1919 and declaring an independent Ireland. At the same time, the Irish Volunteers—reconstituting themselves gradually as the Irish Republican Army (IRA)—began a program of armed resistance to British law enforcement officials, whom they saw as agents of a hostile and now foreign state. Michael Collins, a survivor of the Easter Rising and the new leader of the IRA, introduced an era of widespread political assassination with his handpicked squad of guerrilla fighters. The British responded to what it perceived as terrorist activities with increased military and police force, but even the use of the infamous “Black and Tan” soldiers—poorly disciplined and often drunk—tended only to increase support for the new Irish government and for IRA violence.

After several years of guerrilla warfare, an uneasy truce recognized the reorganization of 26 southern and western counties into the Irish Free State in December 1921. The six northern counties that included Ulster were renamed Northern Ireland and remained in union with Great Britain, to be governed in domestic affairs by the new Parliament of Northern Ireland. The Irish Free State was given the same dominion status as that granted to Canada, an act that enraged the republican members of the IRA and Sinn Féin but which negotiators accepted as the only practical option and as a necessary step on the road to complete autonomy. The major sticking point—an oath of loyalty to the Commonwealth—would eventually be dropped after 1932.

The Anglo-Irish Treaty that established these conditions was accepted by a narrow margin in the Dáil in March 1922, and the close vote prefigured the mood of the newly independent country. Although fewer than a third of the seats in the new Provisional Government established by the treaty went to anti-treaty candidates, it was clear that those who opposed the partition of Ireland would not accept the new reality quietly. de Valera himself refused to acknowledge a partitioned Ireland, walking out of the Dáil after the treaty was confirmed. Even the IRA was divided, with Collins's loyalists accepting the treaty and a vocal minority, known as the Irregulars, providing the militia for the anti-treaty faction.

The treaty established both an executive and a legislative branch, with a governor-general supported by a cabinet called the Executive Council and a provisional parliament that would be elected through a proportional representation system that ensured both nationalist and unionist voices were represented. These structures were to absorb the functions of both the Dáil Éireann, the revolutionary government led by de Valera, and the Provisional Government, which generally reflected pro-treaty sentiment. However, the divisions over the treaty itself proved too deep to overcome: civil war broke out in June 1922 and lasted for 12 months, with hundreds on each side killed in the fighting. Michael Collins himself died in an ambush in August 1922. The Provisional Government was supported militarily by the British government in Whitehall, where the Commonwealth status of the Irish Free State was highly preferable to a completely independent and autonomous republic. The Provisional Government gained notoriety for its brutal tactics against its opponents, including the suspension of trial by jury for suspected rebels. Some 10,000 individuals were simply thrown in jail without due process during the 12 months of war. The anti-treaty forces surrendered on May 24, 1923.

After the civil war ended, new elections placed most power in the hands of the reconstituted Provisional Party, the Cumann na nGaedheal. Sinn Féin remained resolutely anti-treaty and refused to sit in the Dublin parliament. The new government had to reestablish stability in the wake of the war and also had to attempt to forge relations with the north, where Catholics retained a painful minority status. It became clear that the new administration had neither power nor appetite for more fighting over the boundaries between the Irish Free State and the North, and gradually the prospect of continued conflict began to subside.

POSTWAR BRITAIN AND THE ELECTIONS OF 1918

The postwar period in Great Britain as a whole was difficult even without the problems of an independent Ireland. Elections in 1918 returned a coalition government now heavily weighted toward the Conservatives but led by David Lloyd George, who had represented British interests during the process of the Treaty of Versailles. This set of elections included women voters for the first time: the 1918 Representation of the People Act had expanded the franchise from 8 million to 21 million to include all adult males as well as women property owners over the age of 30 and also granted women the right to sit in Parliament.

Although Lloyd George continued as prime minister, his Liberal Party had split among itself during the war over various issues, including conscription. The new government in 1918 was therefore primarily a coalition of Conservatives and some so-called Lloyd George Liberals. The minority position was held by Labour, which attracted the huge influx of new working-class voters. Traditional Liberals found themselves left out of the political conversation, a situation that would endure for many decades.

The new Conservative coalition was heavily oriented toward business and industry, a departure from the prewar Conservative alliance with the old squirearchy of Britain. Future prime minister Stanley Baldwin called them “a group of hard-faced men who looked as if they had done well out of the war.”³ Initially, these MPs presided over an 18-month postwar economic boom, a period in which control of essential services was handed back to private capitalists but during which the government also poured significant amounts of money and effort into social programs like subsidized housing and unemployment insurance.

This economic boom did not last. By 1920 the public debt had grown to over £7 billion, pushed upward in part by the period of postwar inflation that had gripped all of Europe in 1918–1919. Unemployment soared, especially in the older industries; by the summer of 1921, over 2 million were out of work. Trade unions turned to the strike again and again as their only real weapon against apparently unresponsive industrial leaders. Women who had entered the workforce by urgent invitation during the war found themselves forced back out as men were given preferential treatment for the jobs that still existed, discovering that suffrage without employment opportunities was a hollow victory indeed.

NEW POLITICAL ALIGNMENTS: RIGHT AND LEFT, CONSERVATIVE AND LABOUR

The war to end all wars spurred significant realignments that were most obvious in politics but that would also characterize arguments over postwar society writ large. The Right, broadly, included business, the professions, the Church of England, and the landed aristocracy and adhered to the tenets of modified free trade, a representative democracy run by an educated elite, a belief in empire (including opposition to any form of independent Ireland), an overwhelming distrust of any type of socialism, and a conviction that “British character” would continue to provide ample leadership for the years ahead. It comfortably enfolded both the traditional Conservatives and many Liberal Unionists.

The Left included most Independent Liberals, Labour, the Fabians, and many religious Nonconformists and others unhappy with the status quo. (As noted earlier, the traditional Liberal Party had lost so much ground as to be only a minor coalition partner in any immediate political discussions.) Although the Left split within itself over ideological issues—the emergence of the Communist Soviet Union was only the most prominent of these issues—they did agree that postwar policy must include the nationalization of key industries, the government provision of a broad array of social services that were not linked to any idea of the moral character of the poor, hostility toward the continuation and especially the expansion of empire, and sympathy for the question of independence for India.

Lloyd George’s coalition government fell in 1922, ostensibly over the question of war between Greece and Turkey: the Chanak Crisis pitted a pro-Greek faction, led by Lloyd George and a young Winston Churchill, against a pro-Turk faction, led by most other Conservatives

within the coalition government. But the coalition government had been fractured for some time, primarily over the Irish Free State and expenditures for social services. New elections swept the Conservatives into power under Scotsman Andrew Bonar Law (October 1922–May 1923), the only prime minister to be born outside the British Isles (he was born in Canada). Labour remained the main opposition party under J. R. Clynes. The Liberals split some 25 percent of the seats among themselves, with the self-proclaimed National Liberals following Lloyd George and the remaining Liberals under H. H. Asquith. Bonar Law, newly diagnosed with terminal throat cancer, resigned after seven months, becoming the shortest-serving prime minister in British history, and was replaced by Chancellor of the Exchequer Stanley Baldwin for the remainder of 1923.

Baldwin's government took aim at the remnants of free trade as a way to address the lingering postwar hyperinflation and to bring down the high unemployment rate, hovering at an apparently immovable 13 percent by 1923. This protectionist approach so enraged Labour and Liberal MPs that Baldwin's government was forced out of office in new elections that saw, for the first time, a Labour government under Ramsay MacDonald placed in power. The king, Victoria's grandson, noted in his diary, "Today 23 years ago dear Grand-mama died. I wonder what she would have thought of a Labour Government."⁴

MacDonald's Labour government, taking office in January 1924, would perhaps have shocked Victoria, but it was by most standards a moderate group of men who subscribed to the gradualism of the Fabians. The chancellor of the exchequer, Philip Snowden, almost immediately lowered taxes in order to cement ties with industry. While this relationship with industry was not wildly popular among Labour voters, the main hurdle over which the party eventually stumbled was the official stance of the government toward the newly declared Soviet Union. It formally recognized the new USSR in early 1924 and voted a loan to the new regime. In October, just before the fall 1924 general elections, the spurious Zinoviev letter appeared in the *Times*, in which the president of the Comintern appeared to call on the Communist Party of Great Britain to work for the overthrow of the Crown. (The letter was revealed as a forgery in 1998.) Voters flocked to the Conservatives, which with 413 seats won a large majority not only of its traditional party base but also of those who had helped elect Labour just two years previously. Labour lost 40 seats, leaving it with 151, enough to demonstrate that it had become the opposition; Liberals lost 118, leaving it with only 40 seats and a newly unequivocal status as a minor party.

Under the Conservative banner, Stanley Baldwin (1924–1929) became prime minister again, with Winston Churchill as the new chancellor of the exchequer and Neville Chamberlain as minister of health, two positions that would prove key in the coming years. Baldwin and his government sought to craft policies to attract as many working-class voters as possible to the Conservative fold, eliminating the risk that Labour might win again. At the same time, he had to place the country on track to a full postwar recovery.

CHRONIC ECONOMIC PROBLEMS AND THE GENERAL STRIKE OF 1926

This latter task was a difficult one. The hyperinflation of the early 1920s gave way to an economic depression, as British industry found itself no longer in command of the international field. Exports dropped dramatically, imports rose, the country's share of world shipping and other invisible services fell, and overseas investments declined. Before mid-decade, interest rates had settled at an impossibly high level in order to discourage unnecessary spending, and many industries began to call for the reintroduction of protective tariffs and lower wages. By early 1925, a patchwork of measures had brought the pound sterling back up to relative parity with the U.S. dollar, and in April Winston Churchill declared a return to the gold standard.

This move was controversial and certainly did not solve the problems of the older industries, especially coal mining. In June 1925, mine owners argued that the survival of the industry depended on drastic measures and announced that wages would drop and working hours would increase, effective immediately. The miners threatened to strike, proclaiming "not a penny off the pay, not a minute on the day." Negotiations, presided over by both the Trades Union Congress (TUC) and the government, merely forestalled the inevitable: the government's Samuel Commission issued a report after nine months of investigation, arguing that the owners had indeed managed the industry poorly but that no steps should currently be taken to raise wages or restore former hours. Instead, more investigation would be necessary before a gradual move toward nationalization could take place. In the meantime, miners would be forced to accept a 13 percent reduction in wages.

Talks between the TUC and the Samuel Commission broke off within weeks of the report, and on May 4, 1926, under the leadership of the TUC, the nation's first general strike began, with miners joined by over 1.5 million union members representing railway, transport,

and dock workers, the metal and building trades, electricity and gas workers, and the printing trades. The government, which had been planning for such a contingency for weeks and which argued vociferously that a general strike was unconstitutional and indeed revolutionary, called on military forces and volunteers to take over essential services.

For nine days, undergraduates from Oxford and Cambridge drove trams while Winston Churchill edited the new national newspaper *The British Gazette*, which was established to provide anti-strike propaganda to the general public. Much of this propaganda harped on the revolutionary nature of the strike, with Baldwin arguing that "Constitutional Government is being attacked."⁵ On May 13 the strike was ended, much to the distress of many of the strikers, as the TUC accepted overtures by the government. The strikers had won nothing, and the event seemed to demonstrate that general strikes were ineffective and should be replaced by renewed political activism.

One year later, the Trade Disputes and Trade Union Act outlawed sympathetic strikes as well as any strike that would "inflict hardship" on the country and also severely limited the actions of unions, forcing them to get written permission from each member before dues could be used for political activities. The only gesture to workers was the establishment of the Mond-Turner debates, a series of conferences beginning in 1927 that brought together leaders of industry and unions in order to try to define future actions and to determine potential government responsibility, particularly for the older industries. Attempts to establish a formal national industrial council that would include management, union, and government representatives failed.

NEW SOCIAL WELFARE PROGRAMS

At the same time, however, the new Ministry of Health under Neville Chamberlain put in place a set of reforms based on the notion that the monetary and intellectual resources of the state should be put to work to help all those who wanted to help themselves. This was not a move back to the 19th-century notion of the "deserving poor" but rather a formal recognition that the government had responsibilities that it alone could fulfill and that the poor often needed a boost in order to leave poverty behind. Chamberlain's ministry rammed through nearly two dozen bills between 1924 and 1929, revising the Old Age Pensions Act, funding new housing, and establishing new health benefits.

Perhaps the most revolutionary action by the ministry came with the 1929 Local Government Act, which abolished the remnants of the

old Poor Law and its emphasis on poor relief and introduced instead the idea of public assistance provided by county agencies. From this point on, assistance would be calculated based not on some subjective notion of moral worth but rather on objective measures such as age, health status, number of dependents, and employment status. All of these programs were to be paid for through conservative economic policies, protecting them from the taint of "socialism." Instead, partial monopolies were granted in important services, but the private, profit-seeking individual still had ample room to operate. Further, there was no talk of eliminating unemployment through "artificial" government intervention. The government should pay unemployment benefits, but the market itself should determine employment levels.

Even with these safeguards, the 1929 act alienated many Conservative voters, and the general election in May 1929 reflected deep political distrust. Many older voters were especially dismayed by the innovations of the secret ballot, now in use for only the second time, and the enfranchisement of women under 30—the so-called Flapper vote. The Labour Party gained a plurality but not a majority of seats, and the Liberal Party enjoyed a resurgence of power as it chose to back Labour in a coalition government. Labour's Ramsay MacDonald (1929–1935) became prime minister. But there was no time for smugness. The crash of the American stock market in October led to a precipitous worldwide depression that placed these programs in jeopardy. Unemployment figures rose to 2.5 million by 1930; export levels fell by 1931 to just over half of what they had been in 1929. The deficit for 1932 was predicted to reach £120 million. Facing a potentially astronomical deficit level, the Labour government fell in 1931, ushering in the formation of a new coalition government, the National Government. MacDonald remained as prime minister until 1935 (he would be replaced by Stanley Baldwin, until 1937, and then Neville Chamberlain, until 1940).

The new National Government immediately slashed unemployment benefits and state salaries, raised taxes, and removed Britain from the gold standard, causing the pound sterling to fall to about 70 percent of its previous value. Even more contentiously, at the Ottawa Conference of 1932, the government introduced a general 10 percent duty on all imported goods except for wheat, meat, and some raw materials. A combination of quotas and subsidies protected domestic production of milk and some other agricultural products, so that farm production rose while food prices remained relatively stable. Other actions by the new government included the nationalization of the London transport industry. The government pointed to lowered levels of unemployment to justify its actions: an initial spike in unemployment to 23 percent in

January 1933 was followed by a steady decline. Unemployment benefits themselves were altered in 1930 to eliminate the hated “generally seeking work test” for short-term benefits and to transfer responsibility for longer-term benefits to the Office of the Exchequer, which would struggle over the intransigent unemployment of the 1930s.

CHANGES WITHIN THE BRITISH EMPIRE

While the focus at home was the economy, imperial tensions added to the changing nature of “Britain” in the 20th century. Dominions were formally defined at the Imperial Conference of 1926 as “autonomous communities within the British Empire, equal in status, in no way subordinate to one another in any aspect of their domestic or external affairs, though united by a common allegiance to the Crown, and freely associated as members of the British Commonwealth of Nations.”⁶ This definition now applied to the Irish Free State, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and Newfoundland. The office of governor-general in these dominions was gradually emptied of any real powers after 1926. At the 1931 Westminster Conference, these dominions were granted power to act without any Crown interference unless requested by the dominion itself.

Other areas of empire continued to provoke conflicting reaction at home and abroad. Britain had participated in the so-called scramble for Africa in the 1880s, adding strategically to its existing holdings in South Africa and Egypt. Britain had also, if somewhat unwillingly, placed troops in Egypt in 1882 to protect the Suez Canal, which it had purchased from the French in 1875. By 1900 new colonies had been established to protect access to the canal as well as to house new military and trading bases on the continent. None of these was considered to be potentially self-governing in the foreseeable future, and thus, a traditional military and administrative machinery continued to characterize the British presence in Africa.

In India, as always, the situation was more complex. India remained “the jewel in the crown of empire,” and by 1910 included not only India but also Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Burma. The notion of self-rule in India as a stepping-stone to full dominion status had been discussed since 1857 but always in terms that portrayed the colony as insufficiently prepared for such measures. Instead, the elite Imperial Civil Service became a feature on the subcontinent, reflecting a largely unquestioned racism with its almost completely white British membership.

In 1885 the first meeting of the Indian National Congress (INC) was convened to discuss India’s future status. The INC increasingly

focused on autonomy and independence, pressuring the government in Westminster to move toward a reconstructed government for India that replaced white British officers and governors with educated Indians, whose numbers had steadily grown during the Victorian period. By the end of the 19th century the discussions of an autonomous Indian nation had begun in earnest, even as religious differences within the subcontinent threatened to fracture the fragile unity within the INC. The 1905 partition of the provincial state of Bengal divided Hindus and Muslims in what was referred to as a “divide and rule” policy that would last until their reunification in 1911. The policy led unintentionally, but not unexpectedly, to the formation of violent nationalist subgroups within each population. The Muslims eventually withdrew altogether from the INC to form a separate Muslim League in 1906. Reforms in 1909, increasing the membership and makeup of provincial legislative councils as a precursor to a parliamentary system and, in Bengal, establishing separate electoral structures for Hindus and Muslims, satisfied no one, instead strengthening calls for independence and introducing a voice for two separate states.

In 1919 the Crown introduced a constitution that combined provincial self-government with complete British control over the central government. But even as these new measures were implemented, the Jallianwala Bagh or Amritsar Massacre in April 1919, when British troops killed hundreds of native civilians assembled in unarmed protest, signaled the beginning of a new era of resistance. Mohandas Gandhi, born into a Hindu merchant caste and educated for the English bar, had emerged as a civil rights activist and organizer in South Africa in the mid-1910s. Returning to India in 1915, by 1919 he was advocating for peaceful noncooperation against the British Crown and was elected as president of the INC in 1921. The Rowlatt Act, passed in 1919 to suspend the civil rights of suspected revolutionaries, drew much of Gandhi’s wrath and helped prompt the public advocacy of large-scale civil disobedience, which would become a hallmark of the Indian independence movement. Such activism appeared to confirm the worst fears of the doomsayers, that India was simply incapable of self-rule. Others regarded as more dangerous the patchwork of minorities within the subcontinent if they were each granted autonomy, and the INC itself pushed for an autonomous government that would give a central Indian authority vast powers over these minority groups in order to maintain peace and prevent the further eruption of religious violence. In 1929, the INC declared a goal of complete independence for India, naming January 26, 1930, as Independence Day.

LITERATURE AND CULTURE FROM 1900 THROUGH THE 1920S

Politically and socially, the Great Britain of 1930 would have been nearly unrecognizable to the Britons of 1900. The deliberately shocking works of the Victorian fin de siècle continued to resonate through the first two decades of the new century, while the movements emerging just before and after World War I—the most famous of which was the Bloomsbury movement of Virginia Woolf, Lytton Strachey, E. M. Forster, and Clive and Vanessa Bell—were devoted not only to shifting the boundaries of art and literature but also, in important ways, to reworking the very Victorian themes of family, society, and empire. (These themes were under attack from many sides; one of the most controversial social issues during this period was the open discussion of family planning, led by contraception advocate Marie Stopes.) Novelists experimented with new techniques, including the stream-of-consciousness voice made famous by Woolf and Irish writer James Joyce. Poets including T. S. Eliot and dramatists like George Bernard Shaw also played with language in new ways that were often grouped together under the rubric of “modernism.”

In the 1920s and 1930s, responding to readers and theater-goers who wanted to be respected as educated men and women rather than mocked for their refusal to embrace the coldly modern, a number of authors deliberately applied 20th-century glitter to 19th-century forms, especially that of the fading aristocracy: the plays of Noël Coward were fondly satirical, while the novels of Evelyn Waugh were less affectionate and more cynical. Writers such as the mystery novelist Dorothy Sayers wove up-to-date psychological theory into their thrillers, while authors such as H. G. Wells, Aldous Huxley, and Bertrand Russell explored dystopic futures in novels and essays that were published after the Great War had overturned most comfortable social conventions.

At the same time, mass culture became an increasingly important part of British identity as the cinema, the radio, the new British Broadcasting Company, and an increasing number of mass daily newspapers targeted new populations of readers, eaters, and buyers. By the late 1920s, consumerism had become inseparable from middle-class and working-class culture, as literature and the visual arts were deployed to sell goods from soap and cocoa to a spate of new household appliances. The introduction of the “hire-purchase” program expanded access to these aspirational markers of respectability and solidity, access that would be narrowed but not eliminated in the 1930s and 1940s.

NOTES

1. Lloyd George argued this in a speech at Newcastle, October 9, 1909.
2. Quoted in Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 81.
3. Baldwin to John Maynard Keynes, originally attributed by Keynes to "a Conservative friend" in J. M. Keynes, *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* (London, Macmillan & Co. 1919), p. 91.
4. Quoted in Harold Nicolson, *King George the Fifth: His Life and Reign* (London, Constable & Co. 1952), p. 384.
5. Stanley Baldwin, *British Gazette*, May 6, 1926, p. 1.
6. *The Balfour Declaration. Status of Great Britain and the Dominions* (London, 1926), p. 2.

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Decades of Crisis: 1930–1955

THE 1930S AND LIFE ON THE DOLE

Life in the 1930s continued to be marked both by intractable economic problems and by anxious worries over the fragile international peace. George V, whose private life had been a conventional and happy paean to the values of the middle-class family, shared with many middle-class fathers a deep disappointment in his son and heir, Edward VII (1936). Edward's reputation for wild living and extramarital dalliance was well established, and his impatience with protocol was evident even before his coronation. He formed an attachment to the American socialite Wallis Simpson in the early 1930s, and shortly after he became king he proposed marriage, initiating a constitutional crisis. Simpson had divorced her first husband and was divorcing her second, and Edward's position as ruler over many dominions and as supreme head of the Anglican Church meant that his marriage choice required vetting by both secular and sacred leaders. When Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin told the king that his marriage would not be accepted, Edward famously proclaimed he would abdicate rather than

rule without “the woman I love.” Baldwin had his hands full orchestrating the abdication, which took effect in December 1936, after a reign of only 327 days. Edward’s brother took the throne as George VI (1936–1952). His reign, like those of his father and great-grandmother before him, would provide a model of exemplary personal and family behavior.

Absorbing public interest in the former king’s love life filled the pages of the press and the radio waves, but it could only temporarily allay chronic anxieties over jobs and industry. The serious levels of unemployment that had plagued the kingdom in the 1920s appeared irreversible during the 1930s, significantly changing the culture of the working classes and the attitudes of the government toward the poor and unemployed. The problem was not the temporarily unemployed, a category that carried with it the assumption that unemployment benefits were simply a short-term solution to a short-term problem. The numbers of temporary unemployed, as well as the newly underemployed, certainly increased in the 1930s, and the bitterness of these men and women increased significantly as it became apparent that “temporarily” might mean “forever.” But there was also an entire generation entering adulthood with no prospects of employment whatsoever. This was the challenge of the 1930s, and it was a problem that no previous government had faced.

Complicating all of this was the undeniable fact that the problems of unemployment and underemployment were not national but instead were localized by both geography and industry, affecting most severely the older industries and the rural areas of northern England, Scotland, and Wales. Certain areas, especially mining counties in Wales and the old-industrial city of Glasgow, saw temporary unemployment levels as high as 70 percent in the early 1930s. But many parts of the economy did quite well after the introduction of protective tariffs in 1932. Overall, real wages rose significantly in the 1930s even as many found themselves permanently unemployed. A boom in housing fueled a boom in the purchase of durable consumer goods, while certain industries like the motor industry reshaped whole towns around a new kind of prosperity. This localization of both prosperity and poverty allowed those in the cities and towns of the south to regard the problems of unemployment as manageable, something that would pass as new industries developed to replace the old.

The National Government, the coalition government elected in 1932 and led by Stanley Baldwin through the abdication crisis and by Neville Chamberlain (1937–1940) thereafter, was happy to point to the positives and to argue that the economic recovery of the early 1930s

would eventually lift all boats, even those in the blighted northwest. No new kingdom-wide programs to create jobs would be necessary, although the government passed and then extended the 1934 Special Areas Act to provide extra assistance to South Wales, parts of Scotland, Tyneside, and Cumberland.

Generally, the government's solution to the problems of chronic unemployment was to supplement the existing system of unemployment insurance—a benefit for those who had formerly had a job—with a system of unemployment relief, which was to be extended to all those who couldn't qualify for unemployment insurance because they had been out of work for too long or because they were the never-employed.

The main feature, and the most hated part, of this new program was the so-called household means test, which assessed the income and resources of the entire family before allocating relief to individuals. This had the unfortunate effect of discouraging thrift; it also persuaded people not to take low-paying jobs, since a family could actually receive more benefit if all members were unemployed and out of savings than if some were earning low wages. The 1929 Local Government Act had appeared to move firmly away from any moral calculus for unemployment benefits, building on the late-Victorian studies of Booth and Rowntree. The household means test, adopted in 1931, acted to reintroduce that calculus, subjecting the unemployed to scrutiny that extended to every consumer decision and that encouraged neighbors and friends to report anything that might contradict or undermine the family's own representations of need.

Despite these problems, by the mid-1930s some 40 percent of the unemployed were receiving their only income from "the dole," having exhausted all other sources of benefit such as trade union insurance. Life on the dole became the new normal for many areas, and in too many towns it was not uncommon to have entire neighborhoods dependent on this benefit. Within a few years, Booth and Rowntree's efforts to show that laziness and dissolution were not the primary reason for destitution were finally successful: it was impossible to maintain the fiction that individual moral failure was the root of this kind of poverty. Instead, even the most conservative of Conservatives began to question how the state might best begin to develop programs to help its poorest citizens.

Not surprisingly, the problems of endemic poverty—especially its effects on character and morale—colored popular culture during the interwar period. Walter Greenwood's 1933 novel *Love on the Dole* put a human face on the sufferings of decaying northern industry so

successfully that the British Board of Film Censors deemed the 1941 film version too dangerous to be screened. At the same time, however, this fear of a simmering working-class revolution was matched by a dismay at what appeared to be working-class apathy. The fact that life on the dole did *not* spark wide uprisings perplexed many intellectuals and left-leaning social critics, who believed that the entrenched problems of unemployment and despair should lead, with some direction, to a significant reimagining of political and economic systems. Was mass culture to blame?

On the one hand, the rise of the film industry and the widely photographed romance of Edward VII and Wallis Simpson seemed the perfect anodyne to working-class political activism. Entertainment was cheap and plentiful and could reinforce the status quo. On the other hand, the establishment of inexpensive book imprints like Penguin Books, founded in 1935, made it possible to buy both classic and contemporary works for as little as sixpence and could be a way to reach serious readers within a culture that was perceived, erroneously, to be built almost entirely around pulp fiction, music halls, and football. Which approach reflected the “truth” of working-class culture? Responses to this puzzle included the establishment of the famous Mass Observation project, where volunteer investigators sought to document everyday life at intervals from the coronation of George VI in 1937 to the mid-1960s, hoping to use the techniques of social science to investigate “real life” outside the world of the elite.

At the same time, middle-class culture was subjected to its own critiques, as writers and publishers sought to guide and democratize the solidifying middlebrow market. The Left Book Club, founded in 1936 by Victor Gollancz, was followed in 1937 by the Right Book Club founded by Christina Foyle of the already-famous Foyle’s Bookshop. Both were overtly political, emerging out of the social and intellectual problems posed by the Spanish Civil War and the sharpening antagonism between communism and fascism.

Both communist and fascist sympathizers were seeking some measure of order that would resolve the apparent disarray that plagued Britain. The Soviet Union’s experiment with communism attracted a small but vocal minority that included many former Fabians. At the opposite extreme, Sir Oswald Mosley emerged as the leader of the relatively ineffective British Union of Fascists, founded in 1932 and banned in 1940 after the start of World War II. A similar impulse propelled many others into what George Orwell famously dismissed as “smelly little orthodoxies”—vegetarianism, feminism, and anti-vivisectionism, among others.¹

THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR AND THE QUESTION OF APPEASEMENT

When the Spanish Civil War erupted in 1936, men from around the world traveled to Spain to fight either for the Republicans, who were defending the existing structures of government, or for Francisco Franco's Nationalists, who backed the conservative forces that included the Catholic Church and the military. Britons were no exception. Despite an 1870 law that prohibited British citizens from enlisting to fight those with whom Britain was at peace, thousands joined the battle against Franco. Baldwin's government maintained a line of strict neutrality and even instituted a blockade against arms shipments to the Republicans, hoping to avoid formal involvement; informal involvement was unavoidable, however, with many Catholics—most from Ireland—supporting Franco against the threats of global communism. The battles between the two sides—both of them revolutionary in their own way—appeared to be a straightforward ideological clash between fascists and democratic Republicans, and the civil war became a favorite cause of both conservative and liberal cultures within Britain, each side claiming a moral high ground.

The ongoing discussions, many managed by Gollancz and Foyle in the pages of their book club selections, deepened beyond the Spanish conflict to explore the social changes that had already transformed Britain since the end of the war. Grappling not only with the effects of comprehensive political suffrage, intractable economic hardship, new social and economic roles for women, and the unnerving aspects of a more consumerist society, these voices also examined the dangers presented by a new war. It was easy to assert that this war was localized to Spain only if one was not paying attention; most observers saw it more clearly as a microcosm of the divisive and potentially violent change sweeping across Europe. By the late 1930s men and women were openly considering what World War II might look like—or if such a war could be survived at all.

Britain, like most of Europe, had pursued disarmament during the 1920s and early 1930s, cutting military expenditures in part to help reduce budget deficits. Economic interests thus appeared to reinforce the anti-military stance that was common across class and geographical boundaries. This stance was expressed both through a generalized war-weariness and through a range of more formal activism, from women's groups involved in refugee relief efforts to international attempts to standardize arms limitation, most famously at the Geneva Conference of 1932–1934.

Adolf Hitler's 1933 withdrawal of Germany from the Geneva Conference as well as from the League of Nations provoked some anxiety and, partially in response to these actions, a formal rearmament program began in 1934. By 1935, when failed British efforts to help broker an Abyssinian peace gave way to a stance of formal neutrality that simply cleared the way for the Italian invasion of Ethiopia, most men and women had begun to consider that war might once again consume the Western world. This threat was sharpened over the course of events in Franco's Spain, and Hitler's drive back into the Rhineland in March 1936 appeared to further imperil any "civilized" commitment to disarmament and peace.

Voices raised in favor of rearmament did not mean that any faction wanted war; rather, they wanted reasonable protectionist measures in case the worst should happen. When Joseph Chamberlain's son Neville Chamberlain replaced Stanley Baldwin as prime minister in the general elections following the coronation of the new king George VI in 1937, his dedication to a "reasonable settlement" to prevent the outbreak of any new world war was still very much the popular option. Yet events on the continent challenged that approach. The foreign secretary, Anthony Eden, resigned in early February 1938 in opposition to Britain's acquiescence in the Italian invasion of Ethiopia; Hitler's annexation of Austria a month later was followed by his open plans to take control, by force if necessary, of the Sudetenland area of Czechoslovakia. The split between Eden and Chamberlain echoed the division in public sentiment: many prominent newspapers, such as the *Times*, came out in support of Chamberlain's commitment to peace and self-determination for Czech Germans, while others warned that Hitler would not stop there.

Within the government, preparations began for what increasingly appeared to be an inevitable military conflict with Hitler. In late September 1938, in the days leading up to the Munich accords of September 30, the British government distributed millions of gas masks and made plans to evacuate schoolchildren and adults from London should war break out. This dress rehearsal for war was thorough and shocking, as it made clear that the slow rebuilding of naval and air forces had not yet equipped Britain to fight another large war.

The Munich Agreement of September 30, 1938, signed by Chamberlain and Hitler, appeared to temporarily avert disaster, but the scare underscored the problems in any long-term policies of appeasement. One result was the establishment of the *kindertransport* in late 1938, which over the course of nine months rescued more than 10,000 Jewish children from ghettos in Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia, and



British prime minister Neville Chamberlain, shown here with Nazi official Joachim von Ribbentrop in September 1938, helped broker the Munich Agreement that allowed Adolf Hitler's annexation of the Sudetenland portion of Czechoslovakia. Chamberlain claimed that this appeasement of Hitler was necessary to guarantee "peace in our time," but World War II broke out less than a year later. (Library of Congress)

Poland and placed them with foster families. In many cases, these children would be the only family members to survive the Holocaust.

In March 1939 the worst fears of many appeared to be realized as Hitler annexed the remainder of a purportedly free Czechoslovakia and then turned his attention to Poland. Britain and France quickly put in place treaties with one another and with Poland, pledging to come to the aid of the Polish government with military assistance should Germany invade. These treaties were not signed until the literal eve of war: the treaty with Poland, for instance, took effect on August 25, 1939, just a week before the German invasion.

WORLD WAR II: THE PEOPLE'S WAR

During the Munich crisis of September 1938, the "trial run" for war had forced British urban areas to develop and test bomb shelters and evacuation plans. When actual war broke out a year later, a certain level of preparedness was in place. Conservative backbencher Winston

Churchill (1940–1945) became the prime minister in May 1940, setting the tone for the next several years with his famous “blood, toil, tears and sweat” speech: “Victory—victory at all costs, victory in spite of all terror; victory, however long and hard the road may be.”² In June, the road became particularly long and hard, as France fell and it became “Britain alone” until Russia entered the war in 1941.

This war quickly became “the people’s war” in a way that the Great War had not been. Although World War I had resulted in a planned wartime economy and had asked Britons to sacrifice leisure, consumer goods, and even sons and daughters in ways that made the war a daily companion, World War II was orders of magnitude more intrusive and destructive at home. Hitler initiated the Blitz—air strikes against London and other cities as part of a campaign of intimidation—in September 1940, leading to an estimated 40,000 civilian deaths and two to three times that many wounded. Over the course of eight months, infrastructure damage was also devastating. In one week in April 1941, for instance, Plymouth lost 600 men and women and had 20,000 homes destroyed; a week of bombing in Liverpool killed nearly 2,000. The Scottish cities of Aberdeen and Peterhead were bombed two dozen times or more in the attacks, with the industrial town of Clydebank hit with more than 1,000 bombs during one night in March. In May 1941, the chamber of the House of Commons was destroyed by a bomb. At the height of the Blitz, some 150,000 people were living in the Tube, London’s famous underground subway.

Another series of civilian-target bombings, called the Baedeker Blitz, targeted York, Norwich, Canterbury, Bath, and Exeter in spring 1942, killing more than 1,600 civilians. German occupation of the Channel Islands—never a military target—began in June 1940 and resulted in near-famine conditions by the end of the war. In all, civilian casualties over the course of six years of fighting would reach 69,000 dead and 86,000 seriously injured, with over a third of the country’s housing stock destroyed by bombing. Food rationing became the norm—even the king had a ration book—as did blackout curtains and air raid sirens.

On the front itself, nearly 400,000 soldiers would lose their lives in this war, with unprecedented numbers of men and women drafted into military service. By 1944, approximately 40 percent of eligible men were serving in the armed forces, some 5 million altogether. This meant that the total of 400,000 military dead was very much lower as a percentage of total forces than had been the case in the Great War.

As in the previous war, British soldiers included large numbers of men from throughout the empire. The empire in 1939 spanned more

than a quarter of the world's land mass, and "Britain alone" after the German occupation of most of continental Europe meant that colonies, dominions, and protectorates were called on for both manpower and matériel. Men and women volunteered for the front as well as for the web of structures that supported the fighting in theaters of war that stretched around the globe. Canada supplied more than \$4 billion in aid, while Canada, Rhodesia, Australia, and New Zealand supplied trained pilots. In India, a tacit agreement for postwar independence encouraged several million to volunteer for service. Ireland (Éire), still technically a dominion of Great Britain, maintained a formal policy of neutrality, although more than 50,000 Irish joined the British forces as volunteers and several hundred thousand entered England for wartime work. In Asia, Britain lost significant ground to Japan, which occupied Singapore, Hong Kong, and other colonies.

The costs of the war were astronomical. Much of this was met, at least temporarily, through heavy borrowing from the United States and through heavy taxation at home, nearly 50 percent for those with modest incomes and up to 97 percent in the highest-tax brackets. The government was forced to intervene in the economy in unprecedented ways. In what became known as "war socialism," the government directed production, distribution, and labor organization. Government expenditure skyrocketed to an amazing £6 billion in 1945, and unemployment nearly disappeared.

John Maynard Keynes, an economist associated with the Liberal Party in the 1930s, became one of the chief forces behind the war economy, promoting food subsidies and tax increases simultaneously as a way to fund not only the war but also the vast array of social services that, paradoxically, increased in availability and quality during the war years. Keynes argued that, rather than emphasizing thrift and savings, the government should instead promote consumption as a way to stimulate production and wealth. Government programs should be actively interventionist, using consumption as a way to reach full employment and to end deficit spending, and redistributing at least some wealth in order to eliminate deep pockets of poverty.

A POSTWAR ECONOMY AND THE BIRTH OF THE WELFARE STATE

Keynes and others began early in the war to plan for Britain's post-war economy. One of the key figures in this planning was the social reformer William Beveridge, who had been associated with the Fabians since his work on unemployment insurance as early as 1909. The

Beveridge Report of 1942, *Social Insurance and Allied Services*, became a surprise best seller with the public, articulating a planned economy that was based on a broad notion of social progress. Comprehensive social welfare benefits, including some form of national health insurance, should be the key to any forward movement after the war.

These benefits had to be provided through cooperation between the state and the individual, rather than through only one or the other. This future program of benefits should provide a “national minimum” that would not eliminate capitalist incentives toward individual achievement. Finally, this national minimum should include guaranteed employment (rather than focusing on unemployment insurance) as well as basic health and welfare coverage. All of this, in Beveridge’s proposed scheme, would be funded through compulsory but equitable contributions, so that everyone would be entitled from the start to a flat rate of benefit in exchange for a flat rate of contribution. The hated household means test would be abandoned. Beveridge’s proposals for establishing this new system were further elaborated in his 1944 *Full Employment in a Free Society*.

The Beveridge Report was discussed but not adopted by the wartime coalition government. This reluctance was partly because the Labour and Conservative members of that coalition envisioned a postwar political climate in which one or the other party could again dominate and could then take credit for any sweeping changes in the economy. At the same time, the expenses of the war itself prevented any definitive commitment to such a large program.

In 1945, after peace had been declared, Labour swept into office under Clement Attlee (1945–1951) and began to implement many of the basic ideas articulated in the Beveridge Report, crafting what would become known as the welfare state. It had the advantage, this time, of being a true Labour government, strong enough to avoid any forced compromises with Liberal, Conservative, or Sinn Féin MPs. Socialist Aneurin Bevan served as minister of health, while Ernest Bevin was foreign secretary and Herbert Morrison was prime minister; Ellen Wilkinson, the minister of education, became only the second woman cabinet minister in any British government. (The first, Margaret Bondfield, was minister of labor 1929–1931.)

Attlee’s government would endure until 1951, and in the half dozen years after the end of the war, it nationalized basic industries (airlines, banking, coal, transport, gas and electricity, iron and steel), extended control over much of the insurance and housing industries, and—perhaps most revolutionary—passed the National Health Service (NHS) Act to provide free health care to all Britons. Private medicine

remained an option, but “national health” became part of the national vocabulary, along with complaints about endless waits and over-crowded hospitals.

All of this was built on the concept that full employment—with unemployment no higher than 3 percent—was possible and would pay for these benefits. Labour could thus talk about cradle-to-grave services as part of an overall program of economic strength rather than as a new version of life on the dole. Individuals were expected to work, in an environment where the government guaranteed opportunities for employment, and working individuals and their families would then receive benefits for which they had already indirectly paid. Any unemployment would be temporary. There would be no return to the moral slackness or despair that, for many, had been the worst part of the previous program of unemployment relief.

This program, taken altogether, would be tremendously expensive to introduce, and it came at a time when the national debt was at its highest level ever. Alongside this new constellation of benefits, Attlee’s Labour government put into place acts that extended protection to whole categories of workers, including firefighters, electricians, miners, and dockworkers, and implemented reforms aimed at strengthening families and removing impediments to women’s access to careers in the civil service. The Education Act of 1944 guaranteed free secondary-school education and launched a school-building project to provide the “secondary modern” schools for students who were now required to remain in school until the age of 15. Teacher training accompanied these changes, providing yet more professional opportunities for women. Eventually, the government would also establish free school meals, vocational education, nursery schools, and programs to get veterans into technical schools and universities.

The aid provided by the United States under the Lend-Lease Act ended with the war, to be replaced in 1945 by a low-interest \$3.75 billion loan. This was nowhere near enough to pay for these new programs and to offset war debt or the significant new costs of dismantling the empire. Britain entered a long period of austerity: taxes were raised on income and on inheritance, food rationing was continued and expanded to include bread, and controls on production and distribution were extended. Attempts to jump-start exports, which had fallen to disastrous lows, included new limits on the consumption of domestic goods. On a day-to-day basis, almost every Briton was affected by the experience of endless lines for basic foods and other goods, and by the widespread lack of luxury goods. Ration books would remain part of daily life until the 1950s, when limits on meat

were finally lifted. Living space was also at a premium. Nearly 4 million homes had been destroyed by German bombers, and it took years to replace housing stock; in the 1940s, much of this came in the form of terraced semidetached homes which were built in neighborhoods or towns that were designed to blur class lines between working- and middle-class families, while in the 1950s these efforts were redirected to "council estates" for the working classes.

Paradoxically, those who had been mired in poverty before 1939 saw their standard of living increase dramatically, with nearly full employment and at least a minimum of food and fuel available. Seebohm Rowntree revisited York in the late 1940s and found that the number of people living in what he had labeled "primary poverty" had fallen from 30 percent to 3 percent. But the extras were nearly impossible to come by, and the late 1940s was a period of drabness for many, lightened only slightly by such televised events as the 1947 marriage of Princess Elizabeth to Prince Phillip of Mountbatten and the 1948 London Olympics. Even the well-to-do could no longer sustain the kind of servant-heavy life they had enjoyed before the war.

The chronic problems of indebtedness could not be solved solely by doing without, however, and it was the extension of Marshall Plan aid to Britain and the devaluation of the pound sterling in 1949 by over 30 percent (from \$4.03 to \$2.80) that finally pushed the British economy into recovery.

DISMANTLING THE EMPIRE

One of the expenses that had to be met after the war was the high cost of preparing for the end of empire. The British Empire had not collapsed after 1939, as many had feared; indeed, even the colonies of direct rule whose peoples had been agitating most strongly for self-government remained loyal to the British flag rather than breaking away and negotiating a separate peace with the Germans. But it was clear to almost everyone after 1945 that the empire could no longer be sustained. Bargains struck during the late 1930s and early 1940s already pointed toward eventual self-rule for the remaining parts of empire, and the notion that Britain must simply fulfill its duties of "trusteeship," preparing colonies for autonomy, became the official line. There were, of course, issues of finance: Britain needed its colonial income for as long as possible, and even a Labour government admitted that the economy could not initially sustain itself if the colonies simply disappeared. Morally, as well, the government argued that Britain was obliged to lay the groundwork for successful autonomy,

smoothing the way in areas where religious or ethnic or tribal minorities might otherwise suffer great persecution.

These goals proved difficult to implement evenly or rapidly. In 1945 the Labour government's Colonial Development and Welfare Act appropriated £120 million to the colonies—all of them together—to be used to build roads, schools, houses, colleges, and other structures and to develop potentially lucrative agricultural and manufacturing bases. While these funds seemed to enable potentially rapid transitions to self-government in Asian colonies, in Africa even the most optimistic and anti-imperialist voices agreed that it would be at least a generation before African colonies were ready for any measure of autonomy. Indeed, while many Britons recognized and supported decolonization efforts across the empire, clusters of colonial subjects argued that their own interests demanded the continuation of a strong British administrative and military presence. For example, the hope of a new white East African dominion held great attraction for Britons in Kenya, Uganda, and neighboring areas, and efforts at decolonization there were met with persistent white resistance.

In India, the path to independence was complicated by religious conflict. The Muslim League, formed in 1906, increasingly feared that the formation of an independent India would immediately put the Muslim minority at risk from the Hindu majority, a risk that had been tempered under British control. Agitation for a separate Muslim state had been at the top of the Muslim League's agenda for decades. The 1935 constitution had granted full autonomous powers to the provincial governments while uniting all the provinces along with the remaining princely states under a federal government, in part to sidestep the fraught questions of religious division. World War II continued to defer the inevitable crisis. In the immediate postwar period, however, as it became increasingly clear that Britain neither wished nor could afford to maintain control over India, violence erupted throughout the subcontinent. The Muslim demand for a separate Pakistan appeared in the end the only way to resolve the crisis while avoiding a full-fledged civil war, and even then millions lost their lives in riots and localized fighting. The "jewel in the crown of empire" became two separate states in August 1947, with both India and Pakistan surprisingly choosing to remain members of the Commonwealth.

Indian independence was quickly followed by independence for other colonies and clearer autonomy for members of the informal empire. Burma and Ceylon gained independence in 1948, while portions of the Arabian Peninsula asserted increasing control over British

interests, as seen in the nationalization of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company in the early 1950s.

In Palestine, which had been under British control since 1922 via the Palestine Mandate, postwar conflict rapidly increased between Palestinian Arabs and the Jews, who looked to Britain to fulfill its commitment to help create a Jewish state in the Middle East. Jews had begun to resettle in Palestine in the late 19th century, fleeing pogroms in Eastern Europe. This resettlement had been given ideological structure in 1896, when the publication of Theodor Herzl's *The Jewish State* launched political Zionism, and was further encouraged in 1917 by former prime minister Arthur Balfour's promises to the Zionist Federation of Great Britain and Ireland. Waves of Jews migrated to Palestine in anticipation of the formation of a separate Jewish state of Israel out of Palestine. By the mid-1930s, Jews had settled in Palestine in such numbers that war erupted between Jews and Palestinian Arabs. The British response, to set a limit on the number of Jews who could come into Palestine, was undercut by the thousands of Holocaust refugees who managed to make it to the area; by the end of World War II, a third of the residents of Palestine were Jews. Many more refugees flooded in after the war, and both Jews and Arabs demanded action from the British, sometimes with violence.

In 1947, Britain announced it would withdraw from Palestine, asking the new United Nations to step in and formulate a plan for the area after British withdrawal in May 1948. The UN proposal for a formal partition was vehemently rejected by the Arabs on the grounds that it violated recognized principles of self-determination. One day before the British mandate expired and the British forces formally left the region, Palestine's Jews unilaterally declared the existence of the state of Israel. The result was the 1948 Arab-Israeli War. After a year of fighting, the two sides came to an uneasy agreement that recognized Israel, annexed the West Bank to Jordan, and placed the Gaza Strip under the control of Egypt, where Britain had continued interests.

THE EARLY 1950S AND CHURCHILL'S SUNSET YEARS

As the limits of British international influence and control steadily contracted, life at home was stable and predictable at last. Domestic life turned to the rearing of babies as the birth rate rose after 1945 to levels not seen since before the Great War. Age at marriage dropped, giving couples more fertile years, and by the early 1960s there were nine babies born for every 100 women of childbearing age—a level that guaranteed ample use of Labour's cradle-to-grave program of

services, especially the child allowance that supplemented family incomes for those with two or more children.

The first real blow to the uninterrupted continuation of welfare benefits came in 1951 with the end to the Marshall Plan, which had helped stabilize and reorganize the economy since 1948. Faced with the end of these subsidies and confronted by new Cold War threats in Korea that magnified the dangers of the Soviet bloc, Attlee's Labour government had to make some difficult choices. The fears of possible communist incursions in Europe made it relatively easy to increase the defense budget by some 50 percent. To pay for this, and to meet new wage demands after the end of a two-year wage freeze, Chancellor of the Exchequer Hugh Gaitskell raised the basic income tax to 47.5 percent, with another 50 percent levied in a surtax on the highest incomes.

However, it was not this tax hike but rather Gaitskell's introduction of charges for NHS-supplied dentures and eyeglasses that split Labour, a split that would give the Conservatives the opening they had sought since 1945. Aneurin Bevan, who had created the NHS during his stint as minister of health, was now minister of labor, and he resigned that office in early 1951 in disgust over what he perceived as Gaitskell's mishandling of the health service. Bevan, still a sitting MP, and his followers formed a left-wing faction within Labour that pressed hard to reduce dependence on the United States and to push further toward nationalization of all services. Attlee's attempts to hold his party together failed. This split allowed the Conservatives to win the 1951 general elections by the narrowest of margins, and 76-year-old Winston Churchill (1951–1955) once again became prime minister.

Churchill faced a variety of economic problems, including an astronomical increase in the deficit, prompted in part by the Iranian oil crisis and a new period of inflation. Domestic issues included the continued need for more housing, leading Churchill to create a new Ministry of Housing under Harold Macmillan, which easily met its goal of 300,000 new units of housing by 1953. Much of the housing built under Macmillan's tenure was so-called council housing, owned and operated by local authorities and let at low rates to families with low incomes, rather than the terraced homes built immediately after the war. Other economic reforms included privatizing the steel industry in 1953 and introducing a charge for prescription medications in the NHS.

Away from home, Churchill placed his stamp on foreign policy in a number of ways large and small. He had famously introduced the phrase "the iron curtain" in 1946, at the start of the Cold War, to describe the relationship between the Soviet Union and the Western powers; in the same year, he described Anglo-American ties as a

“special relationship,” setting the stage for decades of partnership. This special relationship would strongly influence Britain’s path forward, as Churchill and the Conservatives grappled with the ways in which Cold War alliances reframed the old tensions inherent in colonialism. Generally, Churchill’s ministry reflected a well-established paternalism, with policies that both reflected old ideas about race and class hierarchy and simultaneously adopted newer policies of liberal reform.

An early example of this came in Kenya, where the Mau Mau Uprising of 1952–1964 pitted tribes loyal to Britain against those fighting for independence; Churchill sent British troops but also supported agrarian reforms when they did not encroach on the privileges of the white settler class. However, this bifurcated approach was not always possible, as Churchill discovered in dealing with another inherited crisis: the Malayan uprising that began in 1948 had, by Churchill’s parliamentary victory, evolved into a Soviet-backed guerilla war. In this case, the Conservative government was forced to admit that it could no longer govern Malaya, Singapore, and other Crown colonies and conceded independence in 1953; the first elections in the newly independent areas were held in 1955.

Churchill’s four-year premiership was dominated by his personality and, increasingly, his reluctance to accommodate the infirmities of age. He refused to wear a hearing aid, for example, forcing his cabinet to shout at him, and he had a stroke—his second—in 1953 because he feared being perceived as weak. His retirement as prime minister in April 1955, at the age of 80, marked the end of an identifiably imperial attitude toward global power; however, he continued to serve as MP for Woodford until 1964. He was the only MP to be elected under both Queen Victoria and Queen Elizabeth II.

THE SUEZ CRISIS

Churchill’s successor as prime minister was Anthony Eden (1955–1957), who inherited a disintegrating relationship with Egypt. Although Egypt had gained nominal independence in 1936, British interests—ranging from Middle Eastern oil to international diplomatic and political alliances—dictated the presence of some 80,000 troops in and around the Suez Canal. The 1936 Anglo-Egyptian Treaty facilitated this presence, granting permission for British troops to remain until 1970, but in 1951 the Egyptian government of King Farouk voided the treaty. Winston Churchill, still in power, and his Conservative government refused to blink. The sheer number of British troops prevented their forced ejection, but the situation was ripe for violent

uprising. Anti-British sentiment led to waves of popular protest in the canal region as well as broader anti-Western rioting in Cairo and other cities. Tensions were also fanned by the Muslim Brotherhood within Egypt, who sought to undermine the young state of Israel.

One wave of protest in 1952 provided the catalyst for a military coup against King Farouk. The new regime of military officers spent a portion of the next two years hammering out an agreement with Britain that, among other changes, would lead to the gradual withdrawal of British troops from the canal region and the end of British dominance in Sudan, just to the south of Egypt, which was formally administered jointly by the two governments. However, Deputy Prime Minister Gamal Nasser seized the presidency in February 1954, surviving an assassination attempt, and began to assert his vision of Egyptian leadership within the Arabian Peninsula.

Nasser sought to exploit Cold War rivalries and emerge as an independent world power, brokering deals with the United States and undermining existing British relationships with Iraq and Jordan. An escalating series of challenges to British influence included an arms treaty with communist Czechoslovakia and the formal recognition of the People's Republic of China, created in 1949. Nasser also sought the return of Palestinian refugees in Egypt to land that would be carved out of the Israeli state and launched a series of raids into Israeli territory. In July 1956, Nasser punctuated his independence from European control by nationalizing the French Suez Canal Company and signaling his rejection of the gradualist end to British control over the canal region.

Within the context of Cold War brinksmanship, Nasser's actions appeared to invite complete destabilization of the region. Both Conservative and Labour MPs urged a powerful response, in part because the need for Middle Eastern oil was so crucial. Nasser was viewed as increasingly dangerous and in need of forcible deterrence, at one point even compared by the left-leaning *Mirror* to Mussolini. At the same time, outright military retaliation might anger British allies and lead to costly escalation in the area. Prime Minister Anthony Eden, beginning his second year in office, weighed what he perceived as Nasser's complete instability against the cautions of those who worried that direct intervention would lead to UN sanctions. While the Conservative government began negotiations with its Egyptian counterpart, Eden himself simultaneously opened secret discussions with France and Israel. The three powers would agree to invade, capture the canal, and oust Nasser. European interests and Israeli autonomy would be reinforced, and Britain would preserve its complex web of alliances and international friendships.

Thus, on October 29, Israel invaded the Sinai Peninsula. France and Britain immediately demanded that both Israel and Egypt withdraw from the Canal Zone, purportedly to allow for peace negotiations. The three powers had already agreed that Israel would refuse this demand, providing cover for Britain and France to invade and demand joint control over the canal region. Accordingly, British and French paratroopers were dispatched to the region on November 5. Nasser's forces seized and blocked the canal, sinking 40 foreign ships. The secret war plans—dubbed “Revise”—had included a bombing campaign against Cairo, but Eden altered those plans to avoid casualties among the American civilians who were being airlifted out of the city.

Nasser armed his own civilians, forcing the invaders to deliberately choose to slaughter “the people” or to hold their fire. French, British, and Israeli troops rapidly defeated Egyptian forces, but reports of the execution of Egyptian prisoners of war circulated almost immediately, tarnishing the military victory. The ceasefire took effect on November 7. British and French forces were withdrawn in December, to be replaced by United Nations Peacekeeping Forces. Israeli forces remained in the Sinai indefinitely. British casualties (16 dead, 96 wounded) and French casualties (10 dead, 33 wounded) were minimal compared to Israeli casualties (172 dead, 817 wounded). The number of Egyptian casualties, however, was in the thousands and included almost 1,000 civilians.

International public opinion, especially in the United States whose financial aid continued to be crucial to the British economy, rapidly turned against Eden's administration, especially as the full details of Project Revise came to light. Even Eden's fellow Conservatives were incensed by what they saw as a cynical and underhanded program of action, one that had failed in its primary objectives: Nasser remained in power and the canal remained closed, not reopening until 1975. Anti-imperial sentiment throughout the colonies and the former colonies was inflamed by the episode. Even many members of the Commonwealth joined in the censure. Domestic opinion was no kinder. Eden's government suffered complete humiliation, and Eden himself was driven by ill health to resign. The mishandling of the invasion as well as its aftermath signaled a marked decline in Britain's global status.

POPULAR CULTURE IN THE 1950S

By the mid-1950s, although the costs of the military and defense continued to slow the overall economic recovery, the standard of living

for most of the population was undeniably higher than it had been at any time in memory. Postwar consumer culture now included not simply canned food and cheap clothing but also household appliances and automobiles. Average weekly earnings rose 50 percent between 1950 and 1955, during which the standard of living improved apace. And because full employment was the norm, this rise in standards of living was not limited to certain areas or certain industries. Until 1970, in fact, the level of unemployment rarely rose above 2 percent.

Popular culture both reflected and challenged this stability. The 1951 Festival of Britain, a deliberate echo of the Great Exhibition a century before, celebrated the arts and industry in six permanent installations in London and the Midlands, as well as with a traveling exhibition designed to reach as many Britons as possible. It was a huge success, attracting over 10 million to the exhibition sites and many more to the 22 arts festivals associated with the event. Those who could not attend could listen and watch as the BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation)—founded as a radio corporation in 1922 and expanded into television in 1936–1937—broadcast special programming about and from the festival. The entire event was designed to mark the end of the long and difficult postwar period and to signal a new era in British life and culture.

The involvement of the BBC was significant, because more and more the broadcasting company and its rivals, including the new ITV, were becoming a central part of British daily life. Radio had been crucial in keeping up morale during World War II, but in the 1950s it was being eclipsed by television—owned by 5 million families in 1956. The BBC as a whole was committed to a particular kind of moral and educational programming, exemplified for many in its so-called Third Programme of arts and classical music. Its television offerings were similarly designed.

Television itself radically changed the ways in which culture was experienced. The coronation of Elizabeth II (1953–present) in 1953 drew millions of viewers to the BBC, giving the event a unique sense of immediacy. Other effects were less uniformly positive: for example, coverage of public sporting events led many to experience football and rugby and tennis from their armchairs, rather than on the field, so that the number of patrons at local sports clubs began to decline precipitously in the 1950s. And the popularity of television led, as it did elsewhere, to a decline in film-going.

The postwar film studios produced popular and important films, but audiences continued to shrink, even after film itself had gained credence as an important cultural tool. The golden age of film,

featuring the works of such directors as David Lean (*Lawrence of Arabia*, *Dr. Zhivago*) and Carol Reed (*The Third Man*), seemed to contract in the 1950s; in reality, it simply changed direction, with sweeping dramas giving way to comedy, satire, and romance films from Ealing Studios and smaller houses. This period was still subject to strict censorship laws, which would be lifted in 1955 and open a new space up to experiments ranging from the horror productions of Hammer Films (*Dracula* and its many offspring) to the new genre of social realism.

In drama and literature, the Right and Left Book Clubs no longer exerted tight control over the reading public. Instead, readers chose from a dizzying array of forms, ranging from the dystopias of the later George Orwell and the melancholy explorations of faith produced by Evelyn Waugh to the sophisticated detective fiction of Graham Greene. New “modern” voices included increasing numbers of writers from the colonial and postcolonial world, including Doris Lessing and the young V. S. Naipul. Middlebrow culture was still loosely cohesive, but it was increasingly challenged by novelists, dramatists, and poets eager to completely dismember the empire and also to explore the fortunes of a declining postimperial Britain.

All of this emotion was driven by two warring perceptions. First, Britain was changing beyond recognition, not only through the continuation of the welfare state but also through various advances in the sciences and industry: Britain detonated its first atomic bomb in 1951, and Watson and Crick began their work on DNA in the early 1950s. Second, Britain was not changing at all but was instead mired in its past and was therefore class-bound, rigid, industrially backward, and without any outlet for the creative and chaotic impulses of its young men and women. Both perceptions were correct, at least in part.

NOTES

1. George Orwell, *The Road to Wigan Pier* (London, Victor Gollancz, Ltd., 1937).
2. Churchill’s words were part of his maiden speech as prime minister, delivered to the House of Commons on May 13, 1940.

10

Consensus, Antagonism, and Decay: Britain 1955–1979

CONSERVATIVES AND LABOUR IN THE 1960S

Churchill's retirement from the premiership in April 1955 signaled the informal end of an era of troubled consensus. The decades ahead would be marked by antagonism as political rivals grappled for power, ideologues bickered over the foundational principles of a modern Britain, generations fought over cultural and social norms, and postcolonial voices clashed over citizenship and belonging. Queen Elizabeth and her family—Prince Philip, daughter Anne, and sons Charles, Andrew, and Edward—provided a symbol of harmony, but even the public's love for the royal family was tempered with concerns over the costs of a decorative and expensive monarchy in a period of growing financial disarray.

Ironically, much of the animus of the late 1950s and 1960s emerged against a backdrop of general political stability and economic growth. Although Churchill's successor, Anthony Eden, was forced to resign

in January 1957 in the wake of the Suez Crisis, the Conservatives continued to hold power under Harold Macmillan (1957–1963) during a period in which, Macmillan famously claimed, Britons had “never had it so good.” Prosperity was widespread, with real wages improving by nearly 40 percent between 1950 and 1965; unemployment was at a marked low; the final echo of postwar austerity, the rationing of gas during the Suez Crisis, ended in May 1957. A menu of social reforms, from the Noise Abatement Act to the reduction of the workweek from 48 to 40 hours, improved work and living conditions for most Britons. Even the 1960–1961 economic crisis—prompted by a period of rapid inflation and resulting in the innocuously labeled “pay pause” that capped wage increases for public sector workers—was short lived and did not appear to shake the stability of the kingdom. Because Conservative policies continued to be based on strong support for the welfare state that had been crafted by Labour, the Labour Party had no major issues on which to challenge the Conservatives.

Despite this generally positive climate, political antagonisms developed. Some emerged within the Conservative Party itself, where ministers split over Macmillan’s “one nation conservatism,” which emphasized a paternalist approach toward reforms rather than economic and social policies motivated primarily by free-market capitalism. In 1958, such disagreements led to the resignation of three cabinet ministers and a hike in interest rates.

Other disagreements focused on Macmillan’s foreign policy decisions. The prime minister, acknowledging the power of civil disobedience emerging from the Pan-African movement, accepted that the last remaining portions of the empire would soon be decolonized, an inevitability he appeared to welcome in his famous 1960 “Winds of Change” speech in South Africa. As we shall see later, the 1960s saw rapid decolonization, beginning with British Somaliland in 1960 and affecting over two dozen colonies, most in sub-Saharan Africa. However, opponents within Macmillan’s party rejected both the end of empire and the threats of unregulated immigration from former colonies, wrapping their nationalism in the mantle of traditional Tory-paternalist values, and formed the Monday Club as a far-right pressure group. By the end of 1963, its membership topped 300, most from outside Parliament; it would attract such extreme nationalists as Enoch Powell and a number of others who would use the club’s right-wing rhetoric to frame their support of apartheid in South Africa and their opposition to the repatriation of large numbers of immigrants from India and the Caribbean.

Macmillan’s other major foreign policy energies were directed toward the continent, where his arguments for joining the European

Economic Community (EEC) were initially unpopular with a wide swathe of both Conservatives and Labour. Such a proposition was also not entirely popular on the continent; France, under President Charles de Gaulle, vetoed the first and second British applications for membership in 1963 and 1967. (A third attempt in 1972 was finally successful.) Membership was resisted at home because, much like Churchill's final term as premier, the EEC openly signaled a seismic reduction in British international power. Conservative opponents were not alone; Labour leader Hugh Gaitskell told his party in 1962 that entry into the EEC would mean "the end of Britain as an independent European state. I make no apology for repeating it. It means the end of a thousand years of history."¹

Divisions over the end of empire signaled weakness within the Conservative Party, weakness that was exacerbated by several espionage scandals in the early 1960s. The Portland Spy Ring involved Soviet agents working out of the naval base in Portland; the Profumo Affair led to the resignation of Minister of War John Profumo, whose mistress was sharing a bed, and presumably also state secrets, with a Soviet attaché; the Vassall Tribunal investigated the work of Soviet spy John Vassall, a mid-level civil servant. Macmillan's government was perceived as incapable of preventing these leaks. However, the Labour Party was unable to move into power in the midst of these scandals, partly due to a series of rifts within the party and also because of the untimely death in 1963 of party leader Hugh Gaitskell.

In 1963 Macmillan resigned due to ill health, and Alec Douglas-Home (1963–1964) became prime minister. As a peer he came to the premiership from the House of Lords—new Labour leader Harold Wilson would refer to him as "an elegant anachronism"—but he renounced his title as 14th Earl of Home four days after he took office. The political scandals of Macmillan's last months in office placed the Conservatives at a disadvantage that Douglas-Home could not overcome, and they lost power to Labour in the general elections of 1964. Harold Wilson became prime minister (1964–1970), but the Labour majority was so small that Wilson called a new set of general elections in 1966. This time Labour returned with numbers that permitted Wilson to move forward on both domestic and foreign programs.

DOMESTIC REFORMS IN AN AGE OF INFLATION

One immediate area at issue was domestic economy. New statistical measures of poverty and wealth in the 1960s forced the government and many individuals to radically reconsider the categories of poverty and affluence in use since Seebohm Rowntree's groundbreaking

studies of York in 1899 and 1935. As a result, many families that had been considered out of poverty under the old guidelines were newly rediscovered as poverty stricken by the mid-1960s. Part of the realignment rested on the widespread acceptance as “normal” of what were previously considered luxury goods, such as televisions and even cars; ownership of consumer goods shot up in the 1950s, but by the mid-1960s, Britons lagged behind those on the continent in terms of ownership of these and other essentials such as washing machines, refrigerators, and telephones. Families without a television in the 1960s were no longer viewed as eccentric but rather as too poor to afford a basic consumer item.

Labour’s response to these new definitions of poverty was to raise spending on welfare programs by an average of 5 percent per year between 1965 and 1970. The Conservatives, back in office after 1970 under Edward Heath (1970–1974), continued this spending until 1974, as did Labour, once again in power in 1974 under Harold Wilson (1974–1976) and then James Callaghan (1976–1979). Interest groups devoted to the elderly, the homeless, the immigrant, the child, and other specific populations kept up continual pressure for more government services. Paying for these required financial creativity, especially in the period of worldwide inflation that characterized the late 1960s and early 1970s. Both Labour and Conservative governments continually had to balance calls for more expenditure with the problems of chronic monetary crises. Periods of wage and price freezes alternated with periods of voluntary cutbacks; all of this provided an odd counterpoint to rising levels of welfare benefits.

This balancing act accommodated a number of important reforms that responded to new social and cultural norms. By 1970, these reforms included liberalized divorce laws, decriminalization of homosexuality in England and Wales (it would be decriminalized in Scotland in 1980 and in Ireland in 1982), legalization of abortion in all of Great Britain except Northern Ireland, an end to capital punishment for most crimes except treason, and the lowering of the voting age to 18. More than 1 million new housing units were built between 1965 and 1970, mortgages were opened up to lower-income buyers, and new protections were extended to renters, while acts in 1965 and 1968 criminalized racial discrimination in housing. Unemployment and social security benefits were increased as well. These and other reforms accounted for 16 percent of the national budget in 1964, rising to 23 percent by 1970.

Increased access to education continued to be a fundamental plank of the Labour platform. In order to counteract the class-based

streaming embedded in the primary/secondary modern system that had been introduced in 1944, the system of so-called comprehensive schools was expanded, replacing the old 11-plus exam system in most areas by 1975. New universities and colleges were built at a rapid pace in the 1960s, including seven new institutions in England, one new and several redesigned universities in Scotland, expanded polytechnic colleges in Wales, and a new university in Ireland. Access to higher education was also expanded through the establishment of the Open University system, where students pursued degrees by correspondence and via radio and television programming.

Of particular concern to many was the wide gap between the sciences and the humanities, in what novelist and scientist C. P. Snow famously dubbed “The Two Cultures” in 1959: British students appeared to excel in the latter at the direct expense of the former, and in a society that was struggling to remain internationally competitive, this gap was a troublesome one. Educators and legislators wrung their hands and proposed any number of solutions to a problem that had a long history in the culture of British—especially English—higher education. The Labour government addressed this issue by pouring money into school science and language laboratories.

While these domestic reforms appeared to fulfill Labour pledges to continue the work that had begun after World War II, the implementation of these new programs was often uneven. New housing stock was frequently substandard, especially the high-density housing flats; funding for some programs—including prescription medications, health coverage for single unemployed men under 45 years, free school milk, and disability benefits—was reduced or altogether eliminated. Because many of the shortfalls disproportionately affected working-class families, Labour’s founding principles often appeared to be compromised.

A POSTIMPERIAL BRITAIN

All of these reforms were built on a financial base severely constricted by the loss of empire. India’s independence in 1947 had been the turning point in the empire, but there were still many colonies, especially in Africa, waiting to receive independence in the 1950s and early 1960s. Compared to the trials of France, Belgium, and the Netherlands, the dismantling of the British Empire ran relatively smoothly. But there were still problems costly in terms of both military spending and human life. One example was Cyprus, where Turks and Greeks continued to battle for dominance. Cyprus had been a British

protectorate since 1878 and a formal crown colony since 1925. Greek Cypriots desired union with Greece; Turkish Cypriots flatly rejected that prospect; and each side supported its own militia, fighting against one another and against British rule. A period of emergency imposed by Britain from 1955 through 1959 ended with a declaration of independence for Cyprus in 1960.

The problems in eastern Africa remained especially daunting because of the reluctance of white settlers in Kenya and in Rhodesia to recognize or accept change. To solve these problems, the British government proposed the creation of two loose federations that would be built around each of these white-settled colonies, with Kenya buoyed up by Uganda and Tanganyika and white Southern Rhodesia surrounded by Northern Rhodesia (eventually Zambia) and Nyasaland (eventually Malawi). In Kenya, the proposed federation never got a chance: the Mau Mau Uprising in the late 1950s, noted in the previous chapter, was the start of a bloody civil war that pitted nationalists against white settlers. In Rhodesia, a military-supported federation limped into the 1960s, helping keep control of valuable northern copper reserves in the hands of southern whites. Any discussion of shared power and responsibility between Rhodesian whites and blacks remained only talk until the federation itself finally dissolved in 1963 amid bloody turmoil, with Ian Smith leading a white majority that wanted no part in shared power with blacks. In 1965 Smith led the Rhodesian parliament in a unilateral declaration of independence from Britain; Britain responded with trade sanctions but refused to back these sanctions with any show of force.

The situation in Rhodesia was similar to that in South Africa, where minority white rule was also the bitter norm. South Africa had been added to the British Empire piecemeal, becoming a single unitary dominion only in 1909, seven years after the end of the Boer Wars. The Union of South Africa combined under one flag the Cape, Natal, Transvaal, and Orange River colonies, which had been established over the course of the 17th and 18th centuries by Dutch and British settlers and secured through violent wars of conquest against the Xhosa, Zulu, Basotho, Ndebele, and Bapedi tribes. After the native populations had been subdued, fighting broke out between British and Dutch over control of the Boer region, rich in gold and diamonds and also a strategic outpost in the establishment of global empire. The first Boer War lasted only months and ended in British defeat in 1881. The second, from 1899 through 1902, finally wrested control from the Dutch Afrikaner settlers after three years of guerilla warfare. This war witnessed the scandal-ridden establishment of concentration camps for prisoners of war, including Dutch women and children.

White minority rule had long been the norm in all four colonies that eventually formed the Union of South Africa. Four years after the Union was established in 1909, the 1913 Natives Land Act had placed 90 percent of the land in the hands of white settlers who formed only 10 percent of the population, and the formal segregation of apartheid was erected on this foundation of legalized discrimination. These white settlers included both Britons and Dutch Afrikaners, many of whom resented British rule and staged an unsuccessful uprising in 1913 to gain independence. Despite this 1913 rebellion, most Afrikaners joined together to fight with white British settlers and black South Africans against the Germans in World War I. Exemplary war service, in both world wars, did nothing to raise the status of blacks within the system of segregation, however, and when the Union became a self-governing colony in 1934, the white government continued the status quo. In 1948 the system of apartheid was legally cemented into place, reinforcing the 1913 land act with a program to “relocate” black and mixed-race South Africans into “homelands” or “reserves.”

After a 1961 referendum, the country rejected the last of its ties to Britain and formally became the Republic of South Africa. Unlike many former colonies, however, the new Republic of South Africa was pressured within a few weeks to resign its membership in the British Commonwealth due to its formal system of racial segregation. Apartheid was condemned as well in the court of international opinion; the United Nations branded it a “crime against humanity” in 1966, and many member nations eventually adopted economic sanctions as a way to force South Africa to dismantle the legal, political, and economic structures enacted as part of its “homeland” system. Success in this battle came only in the early 1990s.

By the early 1960s, little was left of the former “map of red.” Direct British rule continued in Hong Kong, the Falkland Islands, Gibraltar, the British Honduras, and a few other scattered areas, but the notion of Britain as an imperial presence was long gone. In its place was a new set of issues arising from decolonization, many of which had to do with finance. The empire had proved increasingly expensive to maintain into the 20th century, but the loss of dependable markets was undeniably a problem. Less was spent on defense after the colonies were granted independence, but these cuts did little to balance the economic losses.

Other issues were even more difficult than the economic problems faced by both Britain and the former colonies. How would Britain, along with the so-called Old Commonwealth of white settlement (including Canada, Australia, and New Zealand) and the New Commonwealth (India, Pakistan, the West Indies, and former African

colonies), define the status and privileges of these former colonies and their peoples, white and nonwhite? Many of these individuals maintained strong ties of emotional attachment and family connection to those in the British Isles, and both Conservative and Labour leaders were initially reluctant to disrupt them.

As a result, more than 1 million immigrants from these former colonies flooded into Britain in the 1950s and early 1960s, until the 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act limited immigration to those who could prove they had a job awaiting them. In many cities, nonwhite immigrants replaced working-class whites as the owners of corner shops and the residents of upscale, high-density housing. Race tensions became commonplace in urban areas, with race riots in Nottingham and in London in 1958. The passage of the 1965 Race Relations Act outlawing discrimination did little to ease the anxieties caused by large numbers of families coming to Britain from the New Commonwealth. In 1968, the Labour government tightened immigration restrictions once again, despite criticisms that these new restrictions further diluted the ideological foundations of the party. These new limits set up a practice of specifically race-linked controls that gave preferential treatment to white rather than nonwhite holders of British passports.

Despite these controls, racist fears grew as these immigrant families—most with more children than nonimmigrant families—placed new burdens on the welfare state. And these fears were molded into racist and nationalist propaganda by men such as Enoch Powell, the Conservative MP who had helped found the Monday Club, who was driven from the party in 1968 and went on to find a new home in the Irish Unionist Party.

PROTEST AND DISSENT IN A NEW YOUTH CULTURE

Economic protest and racial tensions punctuated daily life for many Britons in the 1960s and 1970s. However, they were not the only, nor the strongest, influences on youth culture in the postwar period. Instead, by the early 1960s, young people of all classes began to chafe against the trappings of the very affluence that appeared to characterize all levels of the British economy: abundance fueled discontent, articulated in a youth culture that appeared to reject all restraint in behavior, dress, and entertainment. The Beatles and the Rolling Stones changed the face of music; Mary Quant and Twiggy changed the look of fashion. The development of the birth control pill did not in itself significantly change sexual behavior, as many had feared, but it did

symbolize a new openness toward sex and intimacy as well as toward marriage and family.

These new attitudes were noisy and often frightening to the middle aged and middle class. And the availability and wide use of hashish, marijuana, and LSD among the young, along with a simultaneous, if unrelated, rise in working-class juvenile crime, merely intensified the fear that the generation born after World War II appeared to have lost all moral restraint. The cultural aspects of the British youth movement were loose enough to draw in many individuals whose interests differed widely but whose age and desire for rebellion seemed to link them together. However, without a focal point like the Vietnam War in the United States, youth culture in Britain did not automatically mean noisy and disruptive protest: 1968, that year of awful wonders in most Western countries, passed in relative peace in Britain.

The other main focus of cultural protest, however, was directed at a target that was terrifyingly specific: Britain's and the world's accumulation of nuclear missiles. Nuclear weapons had appeared an obvious and logical—and much less expensive—substitute for massive defense spending, and as traditional military expenditures dropped in the 1950s and 1960s, money was funneled into research into the bomb. An agreement with the United States, negotiated under Macmillan, guaranteed the provision of U.S. *Polaris* submarines as the means of launching British warheads, making the British program curiously and irrevocably dependent on the United States but allowing the government to claim that it was autonomous.

The movement against nuclear weapons attracted not only the young and disaffected but also a large cross section of middle-class housewives who had never considered themselves protesters. But these women found the government's arguments of mutual deterrence completely unconvincing and viewed the growth of nuclear arms as an immediate threat to home and family. These parallel sets of concerns converged in February 1958, with the establishment of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. Mobilizing two different groups—thousands of disaffected young men and women protesting broadly against "the establishment," alongside mothers fighting more narrowly for the safety of their children—it grew rapidly throughout the 1960s, most famously hosting marches in 1959, 1961, and 1962 to the laboratory in Aldermaston that housed research into nuclear weapons. The movement's efforts helped establish the 1963 Partial Test Ban Treaty in the wake of the Cuban Missile Crisis, and public interest in antinuclear protest dipped with these successes, not to rise again until the 1980s.



Fitted out as "H-bombs," demonstrators in London march to Hyde Park on May 6, 1957 in a "ban the bomb" protest staged by Britain's Communist Party. These and other protests would help launch the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament in 1958. (Bettmann/Getty Images)

LABOR AND INDUSTRY: CONTINUED ANTAGONISMS

By the late 1960s, even as technical and scientific education for the future received increased funding and attention, the problems of present-day manufacturing continued to challenge legislators and union leaders. The sterling crises and the serious balance-of-payments problems that dogged the Labour government forced unions to accept controls and even reductions in wages and hours, but workers' attitudes toward big industrialists and government hardened with every concession. By the late 1960s, many unions had become highly suspicious of a Labour government that supposedly held dear the interests of the working classes but was apparently willing to sacrifice those interests whenever industry called.

Labour, under Wilson, had tried various ways to solve the economic problems of the late 1960s: the pound was devalued in 1967 (from \$2.80 to \$2.40), and Chancellor of the Exchequer Roy Jenkins drastically raised taxes on consumer goods and on high incomes. But

when these actions were not enough, the government began to propose significant limits on the powers of trade unions. The government could argue that it was merely reflecting the popular mood: productivity lost to strikes had skyrocketed in 1968. By 1969 the general public's view of unions was much less positive than it had been just a few years before, with 27 percent of those polled characterizing unions as "bad" for the country. The new tendency of local shops to strike without the sanction of the national union was especially singled out for criticism.

However, the 10 million Britons who belonged to unions, as well as many committed to the ideals of Labour, found the government's proposals for restructuring deeply offensive. Wilson's administration called for mandatory cooling-off periods and mandatory ballots before a strike could be called, proposals that were eventually withdrawn in the face of deep resentment by unions and by the left wing of the party. It was an embarrassing defeat for the government, but it also left many nonunion workers and professionals angry at the continued power of organized labor.

THE CONSERVATIVES RETAKE CONTROL

Labour lost the general election in 1970, and the Conservatives, under Edward Heath (1970–1974), came to power once more. The new regime pledged itself to reduce the power of both big government and big unions and moved to legally restrict the power of trade unions while committing Britain to a renewal of free trade and market forces. As part of this reorientation, Britain, as part of a larger European economy, was high on the list of Heath's priorities, and he successfully persuaded the EEC to admit Britain in 1973 even as he worked to ratchet down the country's dependent relationship with the United States.

Other aspects of Conservative economic policies included the dismantling of Labour's income policies and wage freezes and a new Industrial Relations Act. This act called for the same mandatory ballots and cooling-off periods that Labour itself had unsuccessfully proposed. But the bill applied only to those unions registered with the government, and the Trades Union Congress immediately advised its member unions to refuse to register so they could remain outside the power of the new Industrial Relations Court. This proved tremendously embarrassing to Heath's new government, and early attempts to invoke the new powers of the court were disastrous.

The ideological commitment to free trade and market forces also suffered early setbacks, as Heath's administration put it to one side in

order to nationalize the bankrupt Rolls-Royce company and then to save the Upper Clyde Shipbuilders. Other embarrassments included a 1972 coal miners' strike. Miners' wages had actually risen ahead of inflation, but the miners as a group had a long and well-publicized history of suffering at the hands of government and mine owners, and public opinion in 1972 was largely on the side of the striking men. British industry, still heavily dependent on coal rather than oil, spun into a temporary decline as the government declared a state of emergency; and the miners eventually wrung major concessions out of the nationalized coal industry.

Heath's Conservative ideology was sacrificed to administrative necessity in other areas as well, as the government intervened in various aspects of daily life. Under the 1972 Local Government Act, the old counties and localities of the country were reorganized in the name of more efficient delivery of services; for example, Cheshire, Lancashire, Yorkshire, and the West Riding became "Greater Manchester," while Staffordshire, Worcestershire, and Warwickshire became "West Midlands," and counties were designated "metropolitan" and "nonmetropolitan." At about the same time, money was decimalized, replacing the old guinea, half-crown, shilling, and pence with 100 "new pence" in each pound. Each of these changes was disorienting and prompted widespread grousing, if no actual resistance.

Fewer people initially resisted the Conservatives' reduction of the income tax rate to 30 percent, although this ushered in a level of deficit spending that had not been seen since World War II. Inflation had reached epic proportions by 1972, mainly because of the oil crisis in the Middle East and the formation of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries. Britain was less dependent on imported oil than other European or North American countries and quickly moved to exploit oil reserves in the North Sea. However, these oil reserves did not shield the country from international economic pressures, and by the third year of Heath's administration, inflation had outstripped even the nominal lending rate of the banks so that, in effect, banks were paying borrowers to borrow. Credit boomed, with predictable results: housing prices skyrocketed as consumers scrambled to purchase and hold onto real property. Prices rose rapidly for all goods, but in these early years of rampant inflation pay raises more than compensated, and for a short time inflation was undeniably beneficial for many ordinary men and women. At the same time, unemployment temporarily fell to 2.6 percent by 1974 but rose steadily thereafter; it would reach 6.2 percent by 1977. Inflation continued apace, at levels averaging over 17 percent between 1974 and 1978, with an all-time

high of 27 percent in 1975. Deficit spending soared to £1 billion in 1973 and £3 billion in 1974.

A second coal strike, this one in late 1973 and early 1974, led up to a general election in February 1974, where to no one's surprise, the Conservatives were ousted. Voters blamed them for runaway inflation, a mandatory three-day workweek, and a new era of candles and making do. Heath hoped for a coalition with the Liberals, who had their first really strong political showing in decades, but he was disappointed, and Labour returned under Wilson for another try.

ANOTHER LABOUR GOVERNMENT: MORE ECONOMIC WOES AND THE “WINTER OF DISCONTENT”

Labour would be in power for five years, first under Wilson (1974–1976) and then under James Callaghan (1976–1979). In 1974, the party moved immediately to repair relations with industry, repealing Conservative legislation on wage limits and settling the coal miners' strike. Industrial earnings skyrocketed, initially pleasing workers but forcing the government to institute wage and price controls after realizing that it would be literally impossible to sustain the inflationary pay hikes that drove the cost of living up by nearly 25 percent in 1975. These measures in and of themselves were insufficient to resolve the economic crises that continued to dog Britain.

By late 1976 another sterling crisis was in full swing, with inflation at 16 percent, unemployment at over 5 percent, interest rates hovering at 15 percent, and the pound down to \$1.57. Labour presided over huge levels of deficit spending, continuing to try to support welfare programs that had been designed in the mid-1940s to operate on full employment and an expanding economy. These programs were now impossible to sustain. The International Monetary Fund offered a loan on harsh terms; Labour was forced to cut many parts of the budget to the bone and to reinvigorate controls on wages and prices.

Union membership surged during this crisis to 13 million, and days lost to strikes soared as well. Unions and Labour were supposed to be on friendly terms, but after several years of reluctant cooperation, the winter of 1978–1979—the so-called winter of discontent—witnessed paralyzing strike activity by organized labor in response to the Labour government's mandate that wage increases be held to 5 percent. Workers in all sectors of the economy walked out, leaving patients untreated at the National Health Service, garbage piling up in the streets, corpses unburied, and merchandise stranded. The presence of television cameras at these selective strikes brought home the extent of

the disruptions, even to those who had escaped most personal experience of the walkouts. A general election was inevitable, as was the result: the Conservatives, campaigning on the slogan “Labour Isn’t Working,” captured an astounding one-third of the votes of union members and swept into office with promises of a fresh start.

“The Troubles” Begin: Unionists and Catholics in Northern Ireland

The Irish Free State, created in 1921, had gradually moved toward independent republican status, becoming Éire in 1937 and the Republic of Ireland in 1948. Éire had remained neutral during World War II, choosing this means of underscoring autonomy from Britain, but postwar economic ties continued to link the republic uneasily to the United Kingdom. The Dáil, the Irish parliament, sought to minimize other links: Irish was declared one of the country’s official languages, Catholicism was recognized as the majority religion, and Irish membership in the EEC was gained in 1973 (the same year in which Great Britain joined). The economy of Ireland continued to lag behind the economies of both Britain and much of the rest of the world, but the republic had emerged and survived despite the naysayers who believed that the extreme nationalism of Sinn Féin and the Irish Republican Army (IRA) could not lead to a true parliamentary democracy.

In the six counties of Northern Ireland, which remained within the kingdom of Great Britain, the problems of nationalism were much more intractable than they were in the south. A small but ardent group of nationalists within Northern Ireland, influenced by the IRA, remained committed to the creation of a single Ireland through the violent overthrow of the “illegitimate” governments that had been created in 1922. These nationalists were viewed with contempt and suspicion by the Unionists, who wanted to preserve the union with England through the devolved Home Rule administration at Stormont Castle. Because most nationalists were Catholic and claimed Celtic heritage, while most Unionists were Protestant and claimed Scots-Presbyterian heritage, this division was not only political but also religious and cultural.

Antagonisms worsened during the frequent periods of economic distress outlined earlier; an early boycott of Belfast manufactures by the Irish Free State, as a protest against the treatment of the Catholic Northern Irish, showed just how vulnerable the northern economy was. Other weaknesses were exploited by the IRA, which continued its attack on the borders of Northern Ireland and stepped up violence against unionist MPs in the 1950s and early 1960s.

The Protestant government of Northern Ireland responded with draconian laws directed at Catholics. Protestant Unionists claimed that Catholics refused to participate fully in the national life of Northern Ireland and that this refusal was treasonous. Therefore, Unionists argued, it was necessary to deny basic voting rights and other privileges to the minority. Catholics, a large minority at 33 percent, argued that their withdrawal into a specifically Catholic subculture was largely a response to widespread discrimination by Protestants in employment, housing, education, and most other aspects of daily life. These two cultures, increasingly antagonistic, were enshrined in separate schools, separate clubs, separate neighborhoods, and separate parades in which, for instance, Protestant marchers swarmed into Catholic neighborhoods to celebrate historic Protestant victories. Chronic economic problems worsened a situation that could have been at least partially eased by lower unemployment and higher wages. Ongoing threats by the IRA did nothing to lower the temperature of the region. And Whitehall, busy elsewhere, was generally happy to let Northern Ireland govern itself, refusing to interfere in the domestic activities of the dominion.

By the mid-1960s, activists in Northern Ireland had formed several nonsectarian civil rights organizations to protest the discrimination aimed primarily at Catholics. Most of these activists were not nationalists seeking to join the Republic of Ireland in the south but rather wished to create a new status for Northern Irish Catholics; they remained Unionists in their overall political orientation but wanted to address the penalties and disabilities directed at the Catholic minority. British pressure from Westminster encouraged the discussion of new laws and new attitudes. However, the continued presence of hard-liners in every Stormont government made it nearly impossible for the two sides to agree on reform, and by 1966 a number of local protest groups and militias, including the Ulster Protestant Volunteer militia founded by Ian Paisley, were taking the conflict to the streets.

In late 1968, a civil rights march in Derry (Londonderry) by the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association forced the government in Belfast to agree to pursue political and social reforms after television cameras caught Protestant police attacking the marchers. But the administration refused to grant the demand for one-man, one-vote representation in local elections. This enraged Catholics, who argued that the government really had never intended any true reforms. It also infuriated Unionists, who felt that any political reform would merely compromise the autonomy of Northern Ireland and move the country away from closer relations to the rest of the United Kingdom and toward a dreaded union with the Republic of Ireland.

A march in January 1969, also near Derry, signaled the complete breakdown in any peaceful move toward conciliation; Unionist mobs ambushed civil rights marchers and ignited a series of violent confrontations that raged through Derry and Belfast for months. One result of these riots was the split within the IRA into the Provisional IRA, which became the paramilitary force associated with the Northern Irish Catholics and eventually with Sinn Féin, and the IRA itself, which reoriented itself along Marxist lines and sought to peacefully create a “workers’ republic” that would encompass both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

By the summer of 1969, the British army had taken up residence in Northern Ireland, in response to continued and escalating violence that increasingly involved fatalities. By 1971, the situation had become so difficult that the army and the Northern Irish police forces—all Protestant—began to imprison IRA members and collaborators without trial. Protest against the new internment camps and the torture used against prisoners led, in turn, to renewed violence by law enforcement officials against civilians, and by 1972 the British government was forced to intervene and dissolve the Northern Irish parliament, decreeing that Northern Ireland would be ruled directly from Westminster. Both the Provisional IRA and the two Ulster unionist paramilitaries—the Ulster Volunteer Force and the Ulster Defence Association—were engaged in an acknowledged war to the finish, and British troops strove in vain to keep the peace.

New political parties were formed in the hopes of capitalizing on the atmosphere of chaos and desperation, including the Democratic Unionist Party of Ian Paisley, who had founded the Ulster Protestant Militia in 1966. Paisley represented the hard right, turning against moderate Unionists and inflaming the situation even further with his extreme rhetoric: he characterized any discussion of compromise as inevitably leading to the end of independent Northern Ireland and the virtually guaranteed slaughter of northern Protestants by southern Catholics, all led by the pope.

This kind of rhetoric, as well as the extremist orientations of paramilitary organizations on both sides, rapidly transformed “The Troubles” from disputes over nationalist and unionist political goals into a religious war pitting Catholics against Protestants. The Provisional IRA—known to the public by this time simply as the IRA—claimed that its Protestant victims were “legitimate,” that is, that they targeted only the official representatives of a repressive regime. On the other side, the Unionist paramilitaries openly declared their intention of

terrorizing all Catholic civilians into denouncing the IRA and withdrawing any support, emotional or financial, from the organization. The use of terror by both sides provided a chilling picture to the outside world; in 1972, for instance, 258 of the 496 victims of Unionist and IRA violence were civilians. Periodic cease-fires never held. Between 1969 and 1976, more than 1,500 people were killed in The Troubles. (By the time peace was eventually brokered in the 1990s, the death toll would reach nearly 4,000, with another 50,000 casualties.)

The British government, viewing direct rule of Northern Ireland as a temporary measure, attempted in the 1973 Northern Ireland Constitution Act to find a solution acceptable to all parties. The act recognized that a united Ireland could come only through the will of the people of Northern Ireland rather than from above, but even this was too much for die-hard Unionists. They protested especially against the inclusion of a Catholic minority in any future Northern Irish parliament, a condition that Westminster argued was nonnegotiable.

Unionists as a group were divided into three camps: one favored devolution, or a form of Home Rule, although they wished for such devolution to exclude Catholics; the second argued for complete absorption into the United Kingdom; and the third pushed for the formation of a completely autonomous Ulster. None wished for a unified Ireland. “Shared power” was the basis for the so-called Sunningdale agreement of 1974, where a governing council that included both Catholics and Protestants was established in the hopes that Home Rule might resume, but it was short lived and direct rule by Westminster remained the order of the day.

The Troubles thus punctuated the already-pressing problems of both Labour and Conservative regimes at Westminster in the 1960s and beyond. No matter what party was in power, however, the administration refused to agree to any action that might signal the defeat of British troops by the IRA, and thus the guerrilla war continued. The IRA attempted to carry the war into England, planting bombs in pubs and parking lots in English towns and cities, and assassinating Lord Mountbatten, the beloved uncle of Queen Elizabeth’s husband, in 1979. Imprisoned IRA members also adopted a policy of hunger strikes, focusing media attention on the slow deaths of inmates such as Bobby Sands, who won a by-election while in prison and whose funeral in May 1981 drew 100,000 people. The government’s resuscitation of the Cat and Mouse Act, temporarily releasing hunger strikers only to rearrest them after they had regained their health, was a predictable failure. The Troubles spilled southward as well, with IRA

bombings in Dublin and other cities of the republic, and as a result the Dáil began its own campaign against the terrorists.

At the same time, however, recognizing the bonds between southern and northern Irish Catholics, the Dáil began to make overtures designed to lower the temperature between the two areas: in 1972, for instance, the constitutional article endowing the Catholic Church with "special status" was struck down, and in 1980 the republic officially recognized Northern Ireland as a province of Britain, rather than as a misplaced limb of a unified Ireland. Reunion of north and south remained the goal, but the Dáil formally agreed that any such unification must be the result of free choice on the part of the Northern Irish. Any such choice appeared very far away in 1979, when Margaret Thatcher took office under a new Conservative regime.

NATIONALISM IN WALES AND SCOTLAND

The other members of the United Kingdom were as restive, if not as violent, as the Irish. Wales and Scotland had both experienced movements of cultural nationalism in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, but in each case the rediscovery of Welsh and Scots identity had developed amicably alongside of, rather than in place of, a larger British identity. In Wales, for instance, the lack of separate political institutions meant that any Welsh nationalist movement was necessarily a movement focused on language and culture. Religious non-conformity formed one strand of Welsh culture; other expressions included the eisteddfodau, annual celebrations of Welsh poetry and song, which were often dominated by Nonconformist clergy, and the glorification of a traditional Welsh peasantry which had, in fact, ceased to exist.

Despite such unpopular decisions at Westminster as the mandate that schoolchildren be taught only in English—one result was that by the 1930s, less than a third of the Welsh actually spoke their native language—movements for political independence continued to be weak and short lived. One of the earliest and most successful, the Young Wales (Cymru Fydd) movement, had lasted only from 1894 through 1896. Continual pressures to disestablish the Anglican Church were finally successful in 1914. Similar pressures to end exclusive land-ownership practices were helped along by the income and inheritance taxes of the interwar administration.

By the early 1920s, Wales was a land of small farmer-owners, with industry centered around the coal mining regions in the south. These areas became centers of working-class solidarity rather than any

specifically local or national identity. Workers in Wales were both workers and Welsh, but they were also British, and found common cause with the Labour Party. In the 1940s, this allegiance began to pay off, as Attlee and then the Conservatives poured resources into the development of new industry in Wales, including steel and oil, to replace the dependence on the area's old coal mines. Despite the encouragement of alternative industry, Wales remained economically depressed. The oil crisis of the early 1970s turned attention back to coal, but Welsh coal miners were unable to win concessions from the government, and by the 1970s unemployment was once again appallingly high.

It was in this atmosphere of economic distress and industrial decay that Welsh nationalism enjoyed a resurgence. This time, however, instead of a limited focus on language and culture, the Welsh Nationalist Party, or Plaid Cymru, mounted a political challenge to Labour and forced the Wilson administration to address the crises of Wales. The establishment of a Welsh Office in 1964 was followed by the Welsh Language Act of 1967, and in the 1970s television broadcasts in Welsh were introduced.

The issue of devolution, already a source of passionate discussion in regard to Northern Ireland, began to be raised for Wales as well, with many in Wales pushing for a new constitution and significant autonomy. In 1974, Labour went so far as to propose elected assemblies for both Wales and Scotland, but without giving these assemblies any legislative powers. Welsh nationalists tended to oppose the idea of such a toothless institution; others feared that any measure of autonomy would lead to further economic decline; and in 1979, when devolution was on the ballot, it was overwhelmingly defeated. This did not mean the end to nationalist sentiment, but when the Conservatives regained office in 1979, the political issue was temporarily dead.

In Scotland, devolution was more ardently pursued, in part because the same oil crisis that crippled England and Wales led to the development of North Sea oil refineries that were, in the words of the Scots, "our oil." American companies contracted to develop the oil used Northern Scotland as the base for storage and refineries, and the activities of the 1970s poured money into the Scottish economy.

But there were problems. Financially, Scotland saw few of the profits, as Whitehall viewed the North Sea oil wells as "British" rather than "Scottish" and acted accordingly. Environmentally, Scotland bore the brunt of the damage to land and sea. Industrially, the ships and equipment used to extract and move the oil were not built in Scotland but were contracted out to cheaper international firms. Thus, despite the

fact that North Sea oil staved off significant disaster for all of the British Isles during the 1970s, Scotland's benefits were dramatically fewer than many had hoped.

This disillusionment with the ways in which oil profits were parceled out helped intensify a campaign for devolution that had already emerged. Since the union of 1707, Scotland had maintained many important institutions quite separate from those of England: a Scottish state church, or kirk; a separate and in important ways different legal system and judiciary; a Scottish civil service; a Scottish Office in Whitehall; a secretary of state for Scotland. These institutions provided an infrastructure for autonomy that was lacking in both Wales and Northern Ireland. And while Welsh nationalists focused most heavily on reviving and preserving Welsh language and literature, in Scotland the focus was more pragmatic. The Scottish National Party, earliest of the parties devoted to devolution, began in the 1960s to talk openly of Home Rule and a devolved parliament, using as part of their campaign message, "It's Scotland's Oil." By 1970, devolution was one of the main issues occupying Scottish voters. It attracted support across the political spectrum in Scotland, from Conservative and Labour alike, as well as from the church and the trade unions.

Wilson bowed to the inevitable, as he had done with Wales, and allowed the question of Home Rule to be placed on a referendum in 1979. But the referenda for both Wales and Scotland were carefully worded to tip the scales against devolution. For one thing, at least 40 percent of all eligible voters had to vote "yes" for devolution to be effective; this in and of itself was designed to kill each bill, as voter turnout was by this point always very low. Wilson calculated that a majority of voters who showed up at the polls might vote in favor, but he also knew that getting out the entire electorate would be impossible, and he was correct. In Wales, less than 12 percent of the eligible voters chose devolution, although 80 percent of those who voted were in favor of it. In Scotland, 32.9 percent of eligible voters chose devolution, and although this reflected a narrow majority of the votes cast, it still was insufficient to meet the standards of the referendum. Thus, Wilson was able to talk about devolution and offer it as an option and then point to low voter turnout to justify the status quo.

THE END OF AN ERA

By the end of 1979, it was clear that Labour was no longer able to remain in power. Year after year had seen desperate economic measures fail in the face of intractable inflation and a stagnant economy.

The “intimate members” of the United Kingdom were chafing, and the defeat of devolution in both Wales and Scotland appeared to many to be the result of a shell game rather than a true reflection of popular sentiment. The Troubles in Northern Ireland had become an unending tragedy, again with no apparent way out. The remnants of empire remained, true, but the Commonwealth countries were often luke-warm in their support of Britain. On many fronts, but especially in terms of the domestic economy, the Conservatives pointed out trenchantly in their 1979 campaign posters that “Britain’s Better Off with the Conservatives.” The question for many was, who would rule the Conservatives?

NOTE

1. “Speech at the Annual Labour Party Conference, 3 October 1962,” in *Britain and the Common Market, Texts of Speeches Made at the 1962 Labour Party Conference by the Rt. Hon Hugh Gaitskell M.P. and the Rt. Hon. George Brown M.P. together with the Policy Statement Accepted by Conference* (London: Labour Party, 1962), pp. 3–23.

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A New Era, 1979–2001: The Thatcher Revolution and the Rise of New Labour

Elizabeth II celebrated her silver jubilee in 1977. After 25 years on the throne, she was a beloved and reassuring presence who represented continuity amid decades of change. A lengthy tour of the Commonwealth cemented her popularity and underscored her disciplined approach toward the duties of her symbolic monarchy. Life under a microscope was not easy: her sister Margaret's divorce from Anthony Armstrong-Jones in 1978 provided ample fodder for the tabloids, as did the 1979 murder of her uncle, Lord Mountbatten, in an IRA bombing. She survived two assassination attempts in 1981 and a home invasion in 1982. The second quarter century of her reign seemed primed to fulfill the ironic promise of the popular saying, "May you live in interesting times."

THE IRON LADY COMES TO POWER

Much of that interest would come within the realm of politics. In 1979, Margaret Thatcher (1979–1990)—soon to be known as the “Iron Lady,” a nickname coined out of spite but adopted by Thatcher herself with enthusiasm—became the first woman prime minister of Great Britain. She had served in government since her first election as MP in 1959, including as education secretary under Heath in the early 1970s, and had been elected to lead the Conservative Party in 1975. Her time in office would radically change Britain, moving firmly away from the general consensus that had united Labour and Conservatives after World War II and instead reinterpreting the 19th-century valorization of free trade, nationalism, and sturdy individualism within a modern context. Her policies became known as “Thatcherism,” defined by her own chancellor of the exchequer, Nigel Lawson (more famous today as the father of popular food writer and broadcaster Nigella Lawson), as “free markets, financial discipline, firm control over public expenditure, tax cuts, nationalism, ‘Victorian values’ (of the Samuel Smiles self-help variety), privatisation and a dash of populism.”¹

Driven by this neoliberalism-and-nationalism ideology, Thatcher’s 11 years in office were characterized by policies that were designed to reinvigorate the economy both by removing state interference and by reining in unions and other forms of labor organizations through selective governmental interventions. This combination of approaches would, in Thatcher’s view, encourage the average man and woman to shake off the learned helplessness of the postwar state and instead exercise decision and judgment in a way that was peculiarly British. Government was necessary and should be national rather than local, but its purview was limited as much as possible to economic policies infused with moral values. Thus, this Conservative government was characterized by a mix of lawmaking and law-removing. Power would be vested firmly in the hands of a limited few, bound together by ideological commitment to the kind of discipline and toughness that had earned the prime minister the nickname “Thatcher the milk-snatcher” when in 1971, as education secretary, she cut school milk programs to fund the Open University.

A NEW APPROACH TO TAXATION AND GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Thatcher’s monetarist economic policies focused not on the Keynesian relationship between consumption and employment but rather



Margaret Thatcher, seen here at a Conservative Party campaign event during the 1979 parliamentary election season, was elected to Parliament in 1959 and became Britain's first woman prime minister in 1979. Known as "the Iron Lady," she served three consecutive terms. (Owen Franken/Corbis via Getty Images)

on control of the money supply: the government should take specific steps to limit inflation and allow wage levels and employment to take care of themselves. Under Thatcher, this meant lowering interest rates and income taxes, eliminating wage and price controls, and ending state interference into what she argued were wholly private business decisions. Her first moves in this direction were to lower the income tax—from 83 percent to 60 percent at the very top (eventually down to 40%), and from 33 percent to 30 percent at the low end—and to begin reducing government services in order to curtail state spending. Indirect taxation—mostly in the form of the value-added tax (VAT), a type of sales tax—was raised to 15 percent.

This combination of economic moves led to accusations that Thatcher's policies favored the rich, a charge that would also be applied to her close personal friend and colleague, the U.S. president Ronald Reagan. But Thatcher was convinced that a short period of adjustment, uncomfortable as that might be, would ultimately bring inflation down more effectively than previous Keynesian models of economic management.

In this, at least on the surface, she was correct. Inflation ramped up sharply early in the Thatcher years but then dropped precipitously, from 18 percent in 1980 to 4.5 percent in 1984 and further to 3 percent

in 1986. At the same time, however, unemployment rose sharply, from 1.4 million in May 1979 to 3.3 million in the winter of 1982–1983. Jobs disappeared from older industries and from the northern cities, so that the experience of displacement was uneven, as it had been in the 1930s. Once again, the southeast and the counties surrounding London were relatively insulated from the recession, while the old north suffered disproportionately. Riots over unemployment and distress reached violent levels, especially in the poorer parts of London and Liverpool.

Alongside these monetarist policies, Thatcher sought to limit the power of “lawless” trade unions, which had surged to an historic high by 1979 and had become increasingly visible—and thus increasingly obvious as a scapegoat for inflation and economic dislocation. The public’s experiences in the winter of discontent of 1978–1979, when so many unions had used the strike in response to wage caps, made it easier for Conservatives to rally support for anti-union action. Between 1980 and 1984, new laws outlawed secondary picketing (picketing at places other than the site of the strike itself), placed limits on closed shops, held unions accountable for a broadened list of illegal actions, called for a mandatory secret ballot before any strike actions, and further increased the powers of individual members to resist union leadership.

Thatcher believed that abandoning wage and price controls would make industries and services more responsive to the pressures of a capitalist economy, and these pressures would, in turn, bring unions more in line with other segments of the economy. Unions pushed back, but the Iron Lady refused to bend: during the coal strike of 1984–1985, for example, the administration calculated successfully that coal reserves and a predicted mild winter would work to the government’s advantage, and the 12-month walkout ended with the defeat of the National Union of Mineworkers.

Thatcher’s economic radicalism carried through in the privatization of many of the companies nationalized decades earlier under the Attlee Labour government. Privatization initiatives sought to reinvigorate the economy both by subjecting industries to the pressures of competition and by making it easier for the average Briton to buy shares and follow the market. “Popular capitalism” found expression in the rapid, if partial, privatization of British Rail, British Airways, British Aerospace, British Petroleum, Rolls-Royce, and others. The gas industry, the water industry, and the telephone industry all followed, although the government was forced to reintroduce some regulation into the utilities and transportation industries in order to keep the country’s infrastructure healthy.

Thatcher's efforts to curb union power were paralleled by a similar drive to limit the autonomy of local government. She perceived local councils as in direct conflict with a consolidated and streamlined national government and specifically sought to end their control over education, housing, and the provision of welfare services. Her dislike for local, and especially Labour, councils was so intense that seven metropolitan authorities, including the Greater London Council, were simply abolished in 1986.

Beginning in the mid-1980s, a variety of bills limited the powers of local authorities to spend money. Local councils depended on both local rates and grants from the central government to fund local services. Thatcher's administration reduced these grants and then, as heavy-spending councils simply raised rates to make up the difference, capped the rates in 1984. Given the structure of government, local councils were helpless to protect themselves against these actions. In 1987–1988 came the next step: a proposal to abolish the rates altogether and replacing them with a new "Community Charge." Rates had been based on property and on rental values and could be raised; the Community Charge would be, in essence, a poll tax levied on every adult. Unlike the rates, any increase in the Community Charge would affect all adult residents of a locality, and thus, all voters would have a vested interest in maintaining controls on local government.

The poll tax, as it soon became known, was perhaps the most disastrous misstep of Thatcher's administration. Even Thatcher's chancellor of the exchequer, Nigel Lawson, objected strenuously to the idea, arguing that the tax was unfair because it placed an undue burden on the poor. The press had a field day, not only because so many voices were raised against the tax but also because Thatcher's own government was split over if and how to modify it for those below the poverty line.

Despite the protests, which included a riot in Trafalgar Square, Thatcher was determined to carry on, and the poll tax was introduced in Scotland in April 1989 and in England a year later. An estimated 40–50 percent simply refused to pay, and the costs of attempting to collect the tax ran up the government's own bills considerably. Thatcher, however, refused to make any U-turn, telling her critics that "the lady's not for turning" (a pun on the 1948 play *The Lady's Not for Burning*). The poll tax became one of the most effective weapons deployed by her political opponents to drive her out of office in 1990, and the abolition of the tax was one of the first actions taken by her successor as Conservative leader and prime minister, John Major.

HOUSING, EDUCATION, AND HEALTH CARE: REINTRODUCING COMPETITION

Other domestic reforms under Thatcher were designed to reduce the culture of dependency that she perceived throughout Britain. In 1980 her administration introduced a program providing low-cost mortgages to those who wanted to buy their own council house. Over a million such homes were sold to their occupiers by 1987, at reduced costs depending on how long they had lived there. Similar measures promoted small business, and the number of self-employed rose to 15 percent of the total workforce, up from 8 percent, in the 11 years of Thatcher's leadership. The gratitude of these new homeowners and small businessmen helped keep Thatcher's popularity levels high, at least through her first two terms of office.

A new education act in 1988 placed national standards at the heart of the school curriculum. Teachers were required to reach "attainment targets" in each classroom. The act also introduced open enrollment and per capita funding in local schools, forcing schools to compete for students and thereby for state funds. Competition was reintroduced in higher education as well through the abolition of the tenure system at universities, a move that reflected Thatcher's mistrust of the traditional professions. University educators, lawyers, journalists, and even the Anglican Church all were lumped into "the chattering classes" in Thatcher's universe.

Other professionals, including physicians, also came in for new programs of competition. The NHS was subject to market forces as local hospitals were compelled to buy services not only from the state but also from private health care providers. General practitioners were given limited budgets and issued the same mandate to choose their laboratories and other ancillary services with an eye to economy. On the other hand, medical service continued to be free and provided for all, so even those who disliked this introduction of market forces had to acknowledge that Thatcher's radicalism was, in the field of health care at least, under some restraint.

THE FALKLANDS WAR AND CONTINUED CONSERVATIVE POWER

While many of these domestic reforms were not difficult for the average Briton to understand or appreciate, they took place against the backdrop of continued widespread economic distress. How, then, did Thatcher win reelection not once but twice, in 1983 and in 1987?

In 1983, Thatcher's victory came from the remnants of empire in the form of the tiny collection of Falkland Islands (including the South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands, all known to Argentines as the Islas Malvinas) off the coast of South America. Britain had occupied the islands since 1833 but had entered into talks with Argentina about transferring sovereignty in the 1960s and again, attempting to cut costs, in the early 1980s. Falklanders themselves, most of them sheep farmers, protested against the transfer and remained under the British flag with one ship, the HMS *Endurance*, providing protection to the islanders.

In 1982 this token of military power was called home as part of an overall effort to reduce defense spending. Shortly thereafter, Argentine military dictator Leopoldo Galtieri sent forces in to capture the islands. An emergency meeting of the Commons on a Saturday morning saw Thatcher enlist the support of the entire House in military action against Argentina, and behind-the-scenes maneuvering netted a UN Security Council resolution condemning Argentina's actions.

The United States, balancing its established ties with Britain against potential friendships in South America, served as mediator in the ensuing crisis, but it was clear that diplomacy would not be persuasive. British ships attacked their Argentine counterparts in April. The British military recaptured the islands in May, with relatively small loss of life. By the middle of June, Argentina had surrendered its claims to the Falklands. Thatcher's decisiveness and determination to retain one of the last outposts of British colonialism were warmly welcomed by the public, and she was able to schedule the general election to take advantage of this new popularity.

Patriotism in this case was magnified by the problems within a substantially weakened Labour Party, which had fractured after 1979 into two distinct groups. The radical left gained control of the party and in 1980 elected Michael Foot as the party leader. Many were surprised by the choice of Foot over Tony Benn, the Labour MP who appeared to be the obvious leader, especially since Benn's menu of Labour policies would go on to provide the basis of the party's platform for the 1980s. These policies included repudiation of the EEC, which Britain had joined in 1973, and a call for unilateral nuclear disarmament, as well as further nationalization of British industries. Foot's elevation alienated the moderates, who formally split and formed the Social Democratic Party (SDP) in 1981. The SDP formed an alliance with the still-surviving Liberal Party and made small but impressive gains in local by-elections. By 1983 the SDP-Liberal alliance was firmly cemented, and within Labour itself even Foot's supporters admitted he was too radical to realistically compete for the office of prime minister.

Labour's chaotic state, added to the upsurge in popularity coming from the Falklands War, guaranteed Thatcher's victory. And Labour's split would continue to work for the benefit of the Conservative Party. Foot resigned in favor of the more moderate Neil Kinnock in 1983, but that was not enough to reunite the party. The SDP-Liberal alliance was uneasy at best; Labour remained in the hands of the militant left; the Conservatives won again, handily, in the general election of 1987. This time, they were able to take advantage of an overall 4 percent growth in the economy. Much of this growth occurred in and around the large urban areas of the south and Midlands and centered on financial services and computers. This economic renewal helped offset the loss of jobs in traditional manufacturing and industry but, once again, did little to lift the mood in the decaying northern centers.

BRITAIN ALONE OR AS PART OF EUROPE? THATCHER AND THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY

One of the issues polarizing Labour, and enraging Thatcher, was Britain's relationship to continental Europe. Britain as an imperial power was long gone. The Falklands War had been fought for the livelihood of, in the words of one historian, "1,800 people, 650,000 sheep, and 10 million penguins,"² and it had inspired emotional rather than rational support.

Other remainders of empire were less uplifting. Britain's involvement in the transition of a Rhodesia ruled by a racist white minority to the majority-ruled Zimbabwe in 1980 had been necessary, but it also showed how significantly Britain's former power had eroded. The passage of the 1981 British Nationality Act seemed a further repudiation of former colonial responsibilities: the act severely limited immigration from the former Commonwealth countries into Britain, essentially eliminating the notion that Commonwealth membership had carried with it full British citizenship. When Thatcher's administration in 1989 agreed to the planned transfer of Hong Kong back to China in 1997, the end of empire appeared complete. Britons both at home and abroad turned their attention to their continental neighbors, albeit reluctantly.

Britain's entrance into the EEC in 1973 had gained lukewarm approval, but any further contractual agreements with continental governments appeared to promise only more expensive food and fewer jobs. Indeed, Thatcher spent much of her first administration badgering the EEC to lower the amount of Britain's monetary contributions, a campaign that was eventually successful. Thatcher herself

persistently refused to participate in the 1979 European Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM), arguing that any centralized European control over exchange rates would cripple the British economy and subject the country to undue international interference. She was equally dismissive of any move toward a common currency and a central European bank. Indeed, she resisted all moves toward closer economic ties to Europe. It took years of persuasion from her cabinet to wrest from Thatcher a grudging agreement to ratify the Single European Act of 1985 as a commitment to closer integration into the EEC (which would become the European Community [EC], in 1993).

This reluctant acceptance of membership in the EEC, however, was as far as Thatcher chose to go. She remained completely opposed to the ERM and any outside interference in the exchange rate, an opposition that led to the resignation of two successive chancellors of the exchequer: Lawson in 1989 and Geoffrey Howe in 1990. Both men believed that Thatcher was resisting the practical reality of a Europe now dominated by a vigorous and reunified Germany. Thatcher was forced by her party to abandon this isolationism in early 1990, before Howe's resignation, and sign off on the ERM, but by then the flight of top advisors from the cabinet was seen as a symptom of a larger problem within Thatcher's government.

This is not to say that membership in the EEC and the march to a federated Europe with a single currency was wholly welcome to Thatcher's opponents. While the SDP-Liberal alliance welcomed both membership in the EEC and, eventually, full participation in whatever model of federated Europe might emerge, hard-liners led by Foot and Kinnock rejected any formal relationship with an EEC they perceived as unfriendly to unions and workers and instead advocated a program of industrial nationalization. There was no clear path toward union with Europe; instead, the weight of past imperial glory continued to complicate the future of Thatcherite Britain.

NORTHERN IRELAND, SCOTLAND, AND WALES

Closer to home was the ongoing problem of Northern Ireland, and in this area Thatcher also proved that "the lady's not for turning." The IRA intensified terrorist acts against civilians and against government officials outside of Ireland and Northern Ireland. An attempted assassination of Thatcher in the 1984 bombing of the Brighton Grand Hotel killed five and injured many others but failed to disrupt negotiations for what would eventually become the 1985 Anglo-Irish Agreement (also known as the Hillsborough Agreement).

This treaty, between Britain and the Republic of Ireland, included clauses that acknowledged both British sovereignty over and Republican interests in Northern Ireland. The treaty called for renewed efforts to protect and reconcile the two cultures of Northern Ireland without violence and to set up new levels of border security, and established an office outside of Belfast devoted to the protection of Dublin's interests in Northern Ireland. The Unionists repudiated the treaty but were unable to come to any alternative agreement as to how to proceed, and the Hillsborough Agreement, although far from perfect, at least established a framework for further discussion. Thatcher had argued from the outset that acknowledging the interests of the Republic of Ireland in Northern Ireland was the only practical way to move forward, and her refusal to cave in to terrorist pressures gave new hope to the eventual establishment of peace in the region.

As for Scotland and Wales, the defeat of the devolution referenda in 1979 imposed a temporary silence on those who wanted independence, but it did nothing to assist in the economic recovery necessary to guarantee continued good relations within the United Kingdom. Labour continued to win in Scotland and Wales throughout Thatcher's administrations, as it did in the depressed north of England. As noted in the last chapter, North Sea oil reserves eventually helped raise the economic profile of Scotland and encouraged efforts in Shetland, Orkney, and the Western Isles to gain a greater share of oil revenues. In Wales, the post-referendum era was marked by the emergence of the arson-happy nationalist group Meibion Glyndŵr, which burned more than 200 English-owned properties to the ground between 1979 and the mid-1990s. In both countries, dim economic prospects in the 1980s led many young men and women to relocate to cities in the south of England where the employment picture was much brighter. The problems of unemployment, especially among the young, appeared unsolvable even as Thatcher was claiming victory against inflation and even as the overall British economy continued to expand.

YOUTH CULTURES IN THATCHER'S BRITAIN

Just as it had in the interwar decade, chronic and apparently intractable unemployment once again shaped whole segments of popular culture. One of the most dangerous of these cultural outgrowths was the development quickly labeled "hooliganism," violence primarily by young men and often concentrated around public sporting events such as football (American soccer). Gang activity associated with football clubs, especially English clubs, had become a significant problem

by the mid-1970s, with new crowd-control measures instituted after a fan's death in 1974. These measures were relatively weak and did little to reduce violence; in fact, public favorite Manchester United was banned from the European leagues after bloody riots in 1975. Players from former colonies were met with racism, which by the 1980s was vicious and widespread.

In 1985, after a string of riot fatalities resulted in England's ban from participation in European matches (Liverpool fans stormed Italian fans just before the European Cup Final, killing dozens and injuring hundreds more), Thatcher created a "war cabinet" to combat the problem. Banning the sale and consumption of alcohol at home football matches helped, but games continued to be punctuated by violence against property and persons, sometimes resulting in death; the most notorious incident occurred in 1989 at the Hillsborough stadium in Sheffield, where 96 died and nearly 800 were injured after a semifinal match. English clubs did not regain access to European matches until 1990.

The tendency toward alcohol-related violence among the young was not limited to sporting events; the 1980s saw an upsurge in so-called lager louts, especially after laws mandating afternoon pub closings were lifted in 1988 and alcohol was more freely available. Calls for more policing and stricter laws on public drunkenness were seen by many as an infringement on civil rights. More worrisome still was the emergence of a new drug culture that had links to football hooliganism, on the one hand, and the so-called rave culture of the late 1980s and early 1990s, on the other hand. The "Second Summer of Love" in 1988–1989 reinterpreted in less benign form the youth culture of the late 1960s, substituting Ecstasy for LSD and electronic synthesizers for psychedelic rock.

The longevity of popular musical figures from the early 1960s—the Rolling Stones, Paul McCartney, Eric Clapton—provided a certain peculiar continuity to the 1970s and beyond, a period of musical innovation that ranged from heavy metal and punk rock to disco and new wave. Music culture after 1970 pushed the boundaries of acceptable behavior just as the rock and roll of the 1960s had done. This time, however, the goals of musicians and writers appeared to be not simply the celebration of energy and freedom but rather a cynical and often nasty rejection of contemporary and established culture.

This rejection could be intellectual and witty in nature: musicians like Elvis Costello, for instance, provided a constant commentary on the Thatcher years through songs that were often melancholy and always satirical. Glam rock, pioneered by David Bowie, was a

peculiarly British subgenre; other subgenres like punk (the Sex Pistols and the Clash) and progressive rock (the Moody Blues and Pink Floyd) gained broader international appeal. Within Britain, Jamaican reggae and Indian bhangra represented important influences of the former empire; similar influences would creep into the film and theater of the 1980s and 1990s, with movies like *My Beautiful Laundrette* and the 2003 hit *Bend It Like Beckham* specifically grappling with the issues of New Commonwealth immigrants and their lives in urban Britain—issues that the government often chose not to address.

JOHN MAJOR COMES TO POWER

By 1990, it was clear that the Thatcher era was drawing to a close. Margaret Thatcher had served three successive terms, the first prime minister to do so since Lord Liverpool in the early 1800s, but she was losing standing within her party. The main problem for her Conservative colleagues was Thatcher's unbending opposition to the EC, and in 1990 there was no small-but-symbolic international war to boost her ratings. Thatcher's offer of support to the United States after the 1990 invasion of Kuwait by Saddam Hussein failed to distract voters from domestic issues. At the same time, Neil Kinnock had begun to successfully revitalize the Labour Party, with Labour winning several by-elections in the late 1980s. All of this spelled the end to Thatcher's leadership in her party. In late 1990 she was replaced by John Major, a man with close ties to Thatcher but who had managed to avoid the personality problems that increasingly plagued the Iron Lady. In the general election of 1990, the Conservatives clung to power, but it was Major, not Thatcher, who would preside over seven more years of Conservative administration.

Major (1990–1997) inherited both economic and social problems from the Thatcher era. His was an economy in recession, with interest rates in the double digits and unemployment at 1.75 million. Nigel Lawson's years of slashing taxes had done significant long-term economic harm that only began to emerge in the 1990s, placing Britain's balance of payments once again firmly in the red and shrinking economic growth to about half a percent annually. Even more difficult, perhaps, was the nature of British society, once again openly polarized around issues of class and race. Major proclaimed in 1990 that he wanted Britain to be "a country that is at ease with itself"—never mind that he was now speaking for four countries, not one—and that Britain would and should transform itself into "a genuinely classless society."³

Major met these economic challenges with a number of steps that included the abolition of the hated poll tax and a consequent increase in the VAT—including, in 1993, a tax on fuel. Public borrowing increased as well in order to continue and then to expand the social services that had been slashed under Thatcher. In 1992, Britain left the ERM after two short years, devaluing the pound in the process. It was a painful retrenchment and one that appeared to undercut all the talk of economic management and fiscal responsibility of previous years.

The problems of social relations were equally difficult. Thatcherite policies of privatization had not, as she had promised, resulted in a society imbued with the moral rectitude and practical values of small-scale capitalism. Instead, privatized companies came under fire as charges of cronyism and greed were leveled at their new CEOs, many of whom had been personal or professional friends of the Iron Lady. Excessive corporate salaries had come at the cost of layoffs and downsizing, on the one hand, and increased prices, on the other. By 1994–1995, even the most Conservative newspapers were running exposés on corruption both in private corporate life and in the so-called quangos—“quasi-autonomous nongovernmental organizations,” the agencies staffed by political appointees who were charged with overseeing governmental functions such as health and housing.

Alongside these reports on corporate mismanagement and dishonesty, there were many stories highlighting the sufferings of the all-too-numerous families who simply fell through the cracks as the NHS and other government agencies were trimmed and realigned. Families who could no longer afford water supplied by now-privatized water companies, families whose members had to wait years for necessary health care, families whose council housing was dilapidated and condemnable, families who finally owned their own homes but who could no longer meet the mortgage payments as interest rates hovered above 12 percent—all of these provided ample material for newspapers and television. Stories about individuals harried over nonpayment of the now-defunct poll tax also received wide attention, written as they were to illustrate what appeared to be a growing and now deeply dangerous divide between rich and poor. British society was not at all “at ease with itself” or “classless”; instead, reading the papers, it appeared increasingly fragmented and at odds with itself.

BRITAIN AND EUROPE UNDER MAJOR

Despite these very serious problems, however, the Conservative government remained in power until 1997. Major and the Conservatives

once again used the issue of Britain's relationship with the rest of Europe to turn public and political attention at least partially away from the problems of private individuals. This time, the Conservatives were increasingly the voice of isolationism, while Labour called for renewed ties to the continent. (The moderate Liberal Democrats, born in 1988 from the merger of Liberals and the Social Democrats who had split from the more left-wing Labourites in 1981, also continued to support further integration into Europe.) Major's role in the passage and ratification of the Maastricht Treaty in 1991 had included two components crucial for Conservative support: first, Britain retained the right to opt out of a future European currency, which would be introduced in 1999; and second, Britain also retained the right to refuse to accept the package of workers' rights and social benefits—the so-called social chapter of the treaty—that would go into effect throughout Europe as part of that agreement.

But these concessions were not enough to prevent many Conservatives from embracing an anti-European position. Many perceived the Maastricht Treaty as extremely threatening to British independence and autonomy. They argued that the right to opt out of a European currency would not necessarily preserve the strength of the pound and that any further economic ties to the continent would inevitably weaken the position of British manufacturing and industry. Further, a federated Europe of whatever composition would threaten the strength of the Crown and of Parliament. Voices raised against the European Union became more and more strident as the introduction of the euro, the single European currency, loomed. All of this infighting took place against the backdrop of unquestionably closer physical ties to Europe, symbolized most potently by the Channel Tunnel, or Chunnel, which opened between Paris and Dover in 1994.

Relations with the continent were also complicated by a widespread panic over British beef production. The increase in bovine spongiform encephalopathy, or "mad cow disease," an illness fatal to humans as well as to cattle, led to an international scare in which British beef was banned on the continent. Farmers feared for their livelihood, and many of them blamed not the relaxation of feed regulations under Thatcher but rather a powerful German lobby that, in the minds of many Britons, sought any opportunity to weaken the British economy. The spread of foot-and-mouth disease in sheep and other livestock in early 2001 would have same effect, with bans against the export of animals and animal products forcing farmers to slaughter entire herds in order to contain a disease that threatened to destroy the wool and lamb industries.

Relations within the isles themselves were relatively peaceful, if neither optimistic nor productive. In Northern Ireland, the Hillsborough Agreement paved the way for incremental movement toward peace. As with everything in Northern Ireland, this process was not a simple one; an IRA bombing in 1987, for instance, killed 11 Protestants in Enniskillen but also turned public opinion even more firmly against the IRA and placed increasing pressure on Sinn Féin to move away from its tacit approval of terror as a political weapon. By 1994, the IRA had been brought to declare “a total cessation of operations,”⁴ a move that was echoed in the voluntary cease-fires of other paramilitary organizations on the Unionist side.

In 1996, the cease-fire was broken with an IRA bombing incident in London’s Canary Wharf district, resulting in 2 fatalities and over 100 casualties. Within two years, however, the historic Good Friday Agreement was reached, brokered between Sinn Féin’s Gerry Adams and the Unionist Donald Trimble through the combined efforts of new prime minister Tony Blair (1997–2007) and U.S. senator George Mitchell. The agreement established an elected assembly based on proportional representation, thus guaranteeing a Catholic presence that reflected the population of Northern Ireland; it also established a north-south ministerial council responsible for security and other measures. At the same time, it gave the devolved government the ability to veto any north-south policies it found offensive.

NEW LABOUR COMES TO POWER

Blair’s involvement in the formation of this agreement and the devolved government it established reflected his own, and Labour’s, wider commitment to the ideal of devolution, which soon became a byword in Scotland as well. Labour had remade itself vigorously in the years of Major’s administration. Tony Blair, MP since 1983, emerged as the face and voice of “New Labour,” taking over the leadership of the party in 1994 after the death of John Smith and steering it to a new and identifiably different set of ideals than those of the still-fractured old Labourite left.

Blair and his followers were primarily targeting not the traditional Labour voters in the working classes but rather the broader middle classes, who generally felt that Conservative policies were lacking in social conscience and who appeared to wish for less nannying and more real assistance for the less fortunate. In December 1993, the *Observer* had published poll results showing that of those polled, 68 percent felt that the government had *not* “made Britain more

prosperous" and 70 percent felt it had *not* "begun to create a classless society"—the two main goals of the Major government. More damning, perhaps, was the fact that only 12 percent felt that the Conservatives were "fair with people" or even "sincere," while a mere 9 percent felt that the government was "in touch with ordinary people."⁵ These numbers appeared to show that a new kind of Labour Party could attract voters across party lines.

New Labour projected itself as younger, more modern, more European, more innovative than any other party, and in 1997 the voters seemed to agree: Blair became prime minister in a landslide victory for Labour, after the long "wilderness years." Along with Blair came a record number of 120 women MPs, 100 of them representing Labour—the largest influx of women into the House of Commons in its history. Blair, the youngest prime minister since the Earl of Liverpool in 1812, infused the office with new energy and would be Labour's longest-serving prime minister, retaining office until 2007. His family life fascinated the public; his fourth child, Leo, was the first baby born to a sitting prime minister in more than 150 years, and his wife Cherie's law career included high-profile and controversial work in human rights and international law. Blair's relative youth was reflected in his willingness to embrace social media and to engage in popular culture, for example, voicing the character "Tony Blair" on a 2003 episode of the animated American show *The Simpsons*.

Blair shaped New Labour for public consumption in ways that capitalized on the underlying sense that Thatcherite Britain, continued under Major, had gone wrong both socially and economically. New Labour was deliberately not Old Labour; it was more inclusive and less committed to the socialist policies of the past, voting in 1995 to eliminate the party's commitment to nationalization of industries and services. It was also willing to acknowledge that privatization was not in and of itself evil and that Thatcherite policies promoting home ownership and reigning in the powers of trade unions had been beneficial to the nation.

Blair appeared to many to take as his model the American presidency of Bill Clinton, with whom he was often compared, and he was accused by opponents and even a number of supporters of seeking to strengthen the powers of the prime minister and cabinet at the expense of Parliament. One of his most controversial proposals was the dissolution of the House of Lords. Only partially successful, he managed to end the practice of hereditary peers sitting in the House of Lords in 1999.

Other pledges made in 1997 included devolution for Wales and Scotland. Acts establishing the Welsh National Assembly and the Scottish parliament were passed in 1998, welcomed by many but viewed as a path toward a permanently weaker British Parliament by others. These critics also worried that Blair was committing significant resources to regional assemblies throughout England, as a counterpart to the devolution of government in Scotland and Wales, even as he was pledging to “reform” the upper house and “modernize” the lower house in ways that appeared to gather more power to the office of the prime minister and his cabinet. Blair’s government was engaged in a careful balancing act, consolidating certain kinds of central authority within the offices of Downing Street, as Thatcher had done, but beginning to reverse Thatcher’s anti-locality campaigns with new initiatives for regional and London government.

Blair’s administration emphatically did not reject all of Thatcher’s economic policies, refusing to renationalize the companies privatized in the 1980s, but New Labour did reintroduce some level of government oversight, especially for privatized infrastructure such as railways. A similar combination of motivations characterized New Labour’s approach to higher education, where government investment in the sciences was paid for partly out of increases in university tuition; to policing, where social programs designed to reinvigorate neighborhoods were matched with an increase in police forces as well as harsher punishments for a variety of crimes; and to welfare benefits, where family-centered policies targeted benefits to single-parent and low-income families even as the chaotic partial privatization of the NHS led to many middle-class families opting out of the system altogether.

New Labour’s efforts to meld a new interpretation of socialism with traditional respect for individualism often fell short, especially as shifting international alliances demanded new approaches to security, surveillance, and privacy. For example, the Human Rights Act of 1998 brought British courts under the aegis of the European Convention on Human Rights and added new guarantees of protection not necessarily included in British law. Similarly, in the wake of the terrorist bombings in the United States on September 11, 2001, the British courts were forced to recognize that the treatment of terrorist suspects had to conform to international law rather than English common law, a realization that came as a shock to many Britons who had always held British law as sufficient and all-encompassing. The seismic reorientation of global politics had immediate ramifications for those at

home; generous resources were allotted to anti-terrorism efforts, but the national identity database set up in 2006 as part of these efforts drew such public outcry that it was disabled in 2010.

Indeed, as the next chapter illustrates, the events of 2001 forced Britain to once again reconsider its role on the world stage. This reconsideration was difficult and always contested. Ongoing debates over integration into the EU, as well as the debates over devolution and a postimperial identity, had the unexpected consequence of igniting debate over the very notion of a British kingdom. In a European context, the mere existence of a monarchy increasingly appeared outdated and unnecessary. The personal travails of the royal family—three of Elizabeth's children had lived through very public divorces—contributed to an overall sense that perhaps it was time to transform Britain into a republic. The death of Prince Charles's ex-wife, Diana, Princess of Wales, in a 1997 automobile accident ironically reawakened a dormant affection for the monarchy. Diana had represented a "real person" among the royals, with her publicly discussed eating disorders, her unhappiness within the Windsor family, her obvious love for her two sons, and, eventually, her advocacy of international relief efforts for victims of land mines, AIDS, and other tragedies. The outpouring of public grief at her death struck many onlookers as excessive but signaled to others that the rumblings of republicanism were premature at best.

NOTES

1. Nigel Lawson, *The View from No. 11: Memoirs of a Tory Radical* (London: Bantam, 1992), p. 64.
2. Thomas William Heyck, *The Peoples of the British Isles: A New History. From 1870 to the Present* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1992), p. 351.
3. Major first made this claim to journalists in an interview outside 10 Downing Street on November 28, 1990, and repeated it in many of his subsequent interviews and speeches; see <http://www.johnmajor.co.uk>.
4. Quoted in Senia Pašeta, *Modern Ireland: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 122.
5. These poll statistics are reprinted in Arthur Marwick, *British Society since 1945: Fourth Edition* (London: Penguin Books, 2003), p. 415.

12

Whither Britain?

A NEW MILLENNIUM

In 2000, the new millennium was celebrated with the opening of the London Millennium Bridge. A pedestrian walkway spanning the Thames, it linked the traditional—St. Paul’s Cathedral and the centuries-old district of the city of London—with the modern—the Tate Modern Gallery of Art and the aggressively renovated district of Bankside, home to both Shakespearean theaters and 21st-century financial centers. The design was a resolutely modern “blade of light,” but old-fashioned fears of collapse closed the bridge shortly after its opening: exceptionally heavy foot traffic amplified the oscillations built into the design and threatened disaster. After a two-year renovation effort, it reopened to much acclaim in 2002.

The Millennium Bridge’s fortunes seemed to symbolize the contradictions inherent in the new century: technological and aesthetic innovation, complicated by unanticipated challenges rooted in age-old human behaviors. Forward movement into a modern Britain was often checked by deeply rooted suspicions of the future and a backward-looking fondness for an imagined past. In no space was this tension so evident as the relationship between the United Kingdom and

the continent. Indeed, the first two decades of the 21st century have been shaped largely around the persistent question of the European Union (EU), both in fact and in law. This chapter explores the ways in which politics, economics, and culture have interacted since 2000 to bring Great Britain to the brink of Brexit.

HARDENING BOUNDARIES OF RACE AND CLASS

British membership in the EU, adopted with trepidation and reluctance by Conservatives and the far left, and with measured enthusiasm by both Labour and the moderate Liberal Democrats, legally began in 1999 with the Maastricht Treaty. Many of the impassioned debates over membership in the 1990s, however, were often simply sharper and more divisive iterations of old arguments over Britain's place in the postcolonial Western world. Boundaries of race and class, which had appeared relatively porous in the 1950s and 1960s, became increasingly hardened as decades of race riots and class protest shaped the language of exclusion. In addition, over the first two decades of the 21st century, economic disparity rooted in ethnicity and class grew increasingly to look like a kind of secular predestination. In 2002, for example, the unemployment rates for white and nonwhite populations were approximately 5 percent and 11.5 percent, respectively; in 2017, those numbers were 4.1 percent and 7.9 percent.¹ Thus, changes in overall rates of unemployment remained relatively static in terms of proportions of persons categorized by race: whether employment was low or high, twice as many nonwhites as whites were unemployed.

These jarring differences were felt everywhere and were intensified after the 2001 bombing of the World Trade Center in New York, as Western nations all began to perceive cultural difference as cultural danger. Counter-terrorism campaigns inevitably focused not only on immigrant status but also on ethnicity and class as signals of anti-Western conspiracy, and these signals were increasingly enfolded into both domestic and foreign policies. Two decades of rhetoric shaped by the modern War on Terror inevitably bled over into arguments about freedom of movement within the EU, so that by the 2016 Brexit vote it was virtually impossible to disentangle economic resentment from fears of the religious and ethnic "other."

THE "WAR ON TERROR" BEGINS

The preconditions for Brexit were put in place during the three-term premiership of Tony Blair and amplified through new technologies.

New Labour was confronted immediately with a world in which the spread of both information and disinformation was unprecedentedly rapid and effortless. Newspaper corporations ranging from Rupert Murdoch's tabloid-based News International to the more staid News UK leapt energetically into the emerging environment of the 24-hour news cycle. As a result, decisions on foreign and domestic policies could be second-guessed by millions whose only credentials were easy access to the Internet and the willingness to join online discussion groups or social media platforms. In 2000, some 30 percent of British households had Internet access; by 2010, that number was 73 percent, and by 2017 it had reached 88 percent. By mid-2017, nearly 60 percent of cell phone users regularly accessed at least one social media platform.²

Against this backdrop of the rapid spread of opinion and fact, Blair's second term in office (2001–2005) was largely defined by the decision to invade Iraq in 2003. Blair had previously sent troops into other theaters of war, including Kosovo (1999), Sierra Leone (2000), and Afghanistan (2001)—all spaces where danger seemed geographically and ideologically contained. But Iraq was different. Blair, along with U.S. president George Bush, was convinced that Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein “threatened not only the region but the world.”³ He deployed some 46,000 troops in search of nonexistent weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) that had been linked to the World Trade Center bombing through both traditional newspaper and television reporting and through the rapidly expanding online world.

So many sources of opinion, ironically, made it more difficult for the government to move forward decisively on foreign policy: Blair's decision to send troops was couched in part as a response to British casualties in the attacks of September 11, but 139 members of Blair's own party voted against him and three of his ministers resigned after the vote was taken. The practical fact of victory—Saddam's regime fell quickly and with very few British casualties—helped temporarily boost his popularity again, but rumors of manipulated intelligence data that exaggerated the possibility of WMDs and evidence of mistreatment of Iraqi prisoners forced Blair on the defensive.⁴ His opponents called him George Bush's “poodle” and argued that the “special relationship” between the United States and the United Kingdom had become a lopsided liability. A combination of public and private hearings, beginning in 2009, would result in the 2016 Chilcot Report, in which Blair and his government were scathingly criticized for relying too heavily on questionable intelligence, misrepresenting the issues of the war to the British people, undermining the UN Security Council

(which had opposed invasion in 2003), failing to adequately arm British troops, and inadequately preparing for postwar rebuilding. In 2015, just before the report was published, Blair acknowledged that the War on Terror had encouraged rather than prevented the rise of ISIS, the radical Islamic state.⁵

Blair was threatened with impeachment in 2004, but the move to impeach stalled early on. However, the political fallout of the invasion weakened Blair's government considerably, as his opponents consistently characterized Blair's decision-making as based on self-interest and falsehood. Blair came in for keen criticism on other foreign policy stances as well, ranging from his 2004 support for Israeli settlements on the West Bank to his friendly relationship with Libyan dictator Muammar Gaddafi and his rumored attempts to force regime change in Zimbabwe in the early 2000s.

Blair's third term, with a much-reduced Labour majority, continued to be defined by terrorism: just two months after the 2005 general election, four radical-Islamic suicide bombers murdered 52 and injured 700 more during the morning rush hour on July 7, 2005. Two weeks after this "7/7" attack, four additional bombs failed to fully detonate, causing havoc in Underground subway stations but no fatalities. Blair's handling of these emergencies earned him plaudits even from his political opponents, and he was named "statesman of the decade" by the international EastWest Institute in December 2005. Labour's response to these acts of terror, however, seemed to encapsulate the tensions between the recognition of 21st-century threats and the traditional constitutional liberties of speech and person. The Terrorism Act of 2006 itself included a controversial prohibition against "encouraging terrorism," which many felt was a dangerous precedent, and Blair failed to win passage of an amendment that would permit suspects to be held without charge for up to 90 days.

The new war on terror encouraged Britons to revisit old and well-established patterns of ethnic and religious suspicion, inevitably inflecting domestic as well as foreign policies. Labour focused on policies that they claimed supported families and promoted individual effort: as shown in the previous chapter, Blair's first term had broadened family leave policies and increased pension and child-care credits, for example, as part of an overall increase in spending in areas of health and social services. Reforms in higher education increased baseline tuition but also provided more financial aid to needy students. Overall, levels of poverty among children and the elderly decreased by nearly 50 percent between 1997 and 2005. At the same time, critics argued that these policies merely increased

the numbers of immigrants, both from outside of Europe and from within the European Union, who wanted to benefit from these safety nets. It was relatively easy to couch these critiques in the language of “otherness,” especially when viewed against the backdrop of increased policing, expanded mandatory DNA collection, and intermittent race riots (e.g., the October 2005 riot in Birmingham pitted immigrant Caribbeans against British Asians and resulted in two deaths and widespread property damage; the riots were sparked by rumors of a rape, never substantiated, and inflamed by stories in both the traditional and online media). Popular reaction to the increase in race-based fearmongering included unsuccessful efforts to ban the Islamic niqab, or full face veil, and to limit other types of modest dress adopted by nonwhite women.

Alongside the new realities of international radicalism and their pressures on domestic tranquility, however, Labour pursued policies and programs that reflected an optimism about the future stemming from a mix of tradition and progressivism. For example, the celebration of Britain’s “green and pleasant Land,” which had for over a century formed a powerful counterpoint to the industrial filth of the city, was given new strength in laws that recognized the “right to roam” on open land and established a number of new public footpaths. This same impetus helped shape Labour’s commitment to a “low-carbon economy” that eventually resulted in the 2008 Climate Change Act. The age-old reality of school bullying, which had been translated to fiction from *Tom Brown’s School Days* to J. K. Rowling’s best-selling Harry Potter books, received its own legal check in the form of established anti-bullying policies in state (rather than private) schools. Negotiations in 2005 led to the 2012 London Olympics, where the opening “Isles of Wonder” program celebrated British history and progress.

RELATIONS WITH THE EU

Against this backdrop of contradictory impulses, British leadership in the modern world took many forms, the most controversial of which was undoubtedly Labour’s changing relationship with the European Union. Blair himself declared in 2005, “I believe in Europe as a political project. I believe in Europe with a strong and caring social dimension.”⁶ His three terms as prime minister were regularly punctuated by speculation that Britain would formally join the EU by ratifying a European Union Constitution, an act continually deferred as other European countries squabbled over their own membership.

A decision to adopt the euro was regularly deferred as well, although British banks have served as major clearinghouses for the euro since its adoption on the continent in 1992.

Unease about EU membership had been a part of the British conversation for decades and centered around a pair of questions asked by virtually every European state: would the EU be a federation of autonomous members whose governments relinquished no independent decision-making power to the proposed European Parliament? Or would the EU usher in a new “intragovernmental” entity that might supersede national sovereignty? The 1992 Maastricht Treaty, with a strictly defined “co-decision” approach to EU governance, generally embraced the federalist perspective. The treaty was followed by a series of agreements that simultaneously welcomed new members and wrestled with rising levels of migration within the EU by the unemployed. The EU promised freedom of movement, while member states often wished to limit inflows of job seekers. The Amsterdam Treaty of 1997 (which took effect in 1999) accommodated more member nations but also required EU states to cede some authority over immigration and certain other legal matters to the European Parliament.

When Britain joined the EU in 1999, the federalist model of the Maastricht Treaty still anchored the Amsterdam Treaty, and it was this federalist model that allowed the British to retain the rights to reject both the euro and the “social chapter” of the EU. A third treaty, the Treaty of Nice (signed 2001, effective in 2003), again increased the number of member states, reduced the number of independent commissions, and altered voting procedures to reflect new membership; six years later, the Lisbon Treaty (signed 2007, effective in 2009) included provisions that permitted new laws to be adopted via a majority vote rather than unanimous agreement. Both of these later treaties appeared to grant relatively increased power to the European Parliament. The Lisbon Treaty also adopted a mechanism by which member states could leave, opening the door for any country to invoke Article 50 and initiate “divorce” proceedings.

The Nice and Lisbon treaties thus clarified the structures and responsibilities of member nations but also appeared to many to be abandoning a federalist structure in favor of a closer and more restrictive union. These changes, arising as they did in a period of radically increasing migration within EU member states, fueled a new hard-right nationalist rhetoric that drew from existing anti-immigrant sentiment. Britain, even retaining as it did certain opt-out powers that more recent members did not have, was not immune from this rhetoric.

Enoch Powell's "Rivers of Blood" speech in 1968, in which he claimed that Britain's pro-immigrant policies and attitudes were like "watching a nation busily engaged in heaping up its own funeral pyre,"⁷ had emboldened the far right, and the embers of postcolonial racism continued to burn long after Powell's own political star had dimmed. Even before Britain formally joined the EU, new political parties had coalesced around the potent elements of racist nationalism.

In Britain, two "euroskeptic" parties—the Referendum Party and the UK Independence Party (UKIP)—emerged in the 1990s and used much of this language to appeal to white working-class Britons who felt particularly threatened by the economic and immigration reforms embedded within EU membership. By 1997, UKIP leadership had been taken over by Nigel Farage, and the party absorbed much of the membership of the Referendum Party, to emerge as part of a broader radical right move within Europe as a whole and also within the United States. UKIP could not prevent Britain's entry into the EU, but under Farage's leadership it began to influence membership in the EU parliament, electing a dozen MEPs (Members of European Parliament; Farage himself had taken his seat as MEP in 1999) in 2004. UKIP's goal was more control over Britain's role in the EU, a battle that could be fought both indirectly in the European Parliament and directly at home in the House of Commons.

Blair stepped down in 2007 after a fourth term, to be succeeded as head of the Labour Party and as prime minister by Gordon Brown (2007–2010), who had served as chancellor of the exchequer under Blair. Brown had campaigned on the platform of "British Jobs for British Workers," promising stricter limits on migrant workers, and had also promised a national referendum on the Lisbon Treaty of 2007. His premiership immediately slammed up against the global recession of 2008, however, and he and his party steadily lost support. The promised referendum never materialized, as Brown argued that the treaty was too complicated to be subjected to a popular vote. In the 2010 general elections, Labour was caught up in a financial scandal over the ways in which many MPs were claiming deductions for second homes and other expenses, a scandal that also besmirched Conservative and Liberal Democrat MPs. Voters expressed their anger by staying away from the polls or by turning to other parties—among them, UKIP.

Like many radical nationalist parties in Europe and the United States, UKIP campaigned on a platform that promised to redress a combination of social and economic grievances. Limits on migration (both within the EU and from outside the member states), lower

taxation, skepticism about climate change, rejection of same-sex marriage—these issues resonated especially with white, blue-collar workers who had not gone to college or university, just as they would nearly a decade later in the U.S. presidential campaign of Donald Trump. None of these issues alone could propel UKIP to national leadership, but they were sufficient to increase pressure on the newly elected Conservative government to reconsider Britain's formal relationships with the continent.

Conservative prime minister David Cameron (2010–2016) had promised just such an assessment during the 2010 general election campaign but had stepped back from a referendum when he was forced to form a coalition government with the Liberal Democrats. In the months before the 2015 general election, however, the Conservative Party introduced a new pledge for a referendum in an effort to retain euroskeptic voters within their party, hoping to neutralize the attractions of UKIP. Cameron promised as well to renegotiate EU status in order to increase British economic and social autonomy through such moves as stronger controls on immigration, limits on benefits available to workers coming into Britain from EU countries, and greater ease in deporting EU nationals who had broken the law. This gambit was successful, and a Conservative government took the reins in 2015, passing the European Union Referendum Act that scheduled a vote for June 23, 2016. A December poll showed that a majority of respondents wished to remain in the EU if Cameron could place limits on the social chapter components of the Lisbon Treaty.

In the weeks leading up to the vote, Farage and UKIP mounted a strong “Leave” campaign outside of London. They were supported by so-called one-nation Conservatives like former London mayor Boris Johnson and a number of Conservatives and UKIP members, as well as a smattering of Labour and Liberal Democrat MPs. Some dozen or so grassroots organizations sprang up as well, most to agitate in favor of Brexit and some merely to heckle; campaign slogans ranged from the false but dignified claim that “We send the EU £50 million every day. Let’s spend it on our NHS instead” to the condom packets urging users to “Vote Leave: it’s riskier to stay in.” Those in opposition to Brexit, the “Remainders,” mounted their own “Britain Stronger in Europe” campaign, but “More Jobs Lower Prices” seemed tepid compared to the emotionally laden “Are you British or European?” and “There are 35 million potholes in Britain but your money is being spent on bridges in Greece.”⁸

The results of the referendum shocked those in the capital and, indeed, observers around the world: the London metro area, all of

Scotland, and portions of Northern Ireland voted “Remain,” but the rest of the United Kingdom (with some urban exceptions in England) voted for “Brexit.” The final tally was 48.1 percent in favor of staying within the EU, 51.9 percent voting to leave. Most “Leavers” were older, white, socially conservative, and living outside the cities; most Remainders were urban, younger, more highly educated, more likely to be persons of color, and more open to immigration and immigrants. Men and women split evenly within each group, with gender having no apparent impact on the vote.⁹

The vote itself was almost immediately contested. Numerous Leavers, interviewed the day after the vote, argued that they had merely wanted to indicate their displeasure with the current relations between Britain and Europe and that they actually wanted to “remain-with-changes” as Cameron had promised. Some confessed they had voted “leave” because they thought “remain” would overwhelmingly win and they simply wanted to be “bloody-minded.” But many Leavers argued instead that this vote reflected a newer, better course for the United Kingdom by, essentially, reclaiming a mythic past when “England was for the English” and global immigration was largely unimaginable. Polls and articles in the days after the referendum reflected everything from dismay to delight, with shock a common element for both the victorious and the defeated.

The political fallout was rapid. Cameron, who had envisioned the referendum as “stay-but-renegotiate,” immediately tendered his resignation, stepping aside as prime minister in July 2016 and resigning his seat in September. He was replaced as party leader and as prime minister by Theresa May (2016–present), who had served under Cameron as home secretary and who became the second woman, after Margaret Thatcher, to hold the premiership. Farage also stepped down from his role as UKIP leader, explaining that his mission as gadfly had been successfully completed and that he would focus on his role as an MEP and his new position as contributor to the right-wing news and entertainment Fox Entertainment Group.

May, who had voted “Remain,” nevertheless refused to consider a second referendum, despite protests ranging from charges of Russian interference and cyberhacking to financial improprieties among the various “leave” groups. She almost immediately replaced many of Cameron’s cabinet ministers with Leavers, including Boris Johnson as foreign secretary. On March 29, 2017, May formally invoked Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty, beginning the two-year countdown to the end of British membership in the EU. Three weeks later, May called for a general election for June, hoping to secure a stronger base from which

to enter into Brexit negotiations. Terrorist attacks in London and Manchester in early June replaced Brexit as the prime focus of voters but did not delay the election. However, the results showed an unanticipated loss of support for both Conservatives and UKIP, forcing the Conservatives to form a coalition government with the Democratic Unionist Party, which had been founded in Northern Ireland in 1971 by Ian Paisley and which had strongly supported Leave.

Despite the decline in support, May's government entered into the complex negotiations mandated under Article 50, with two basic approaches coalescing around the issues of trade and citizenship, approaches that continue, at this writing, to shape understandings of a post-Brexit Britain. Supporters of a "hard" Brexit option want Britain to leave the European Economic Union completely and decisively, renegotiating all trade deals, introducing new tariffs and customs regulations with EU members, and taking complete control of borders, immigration, and citizenship and work status. In contrast, "soft" Brexiteers—many of whom were Remainers—desire a continued economic relationship within the Economic Union and would accept EU regulations on the movement of goods and services but support British control over its own migration policies and would end political membership in the European Parliament. Both approaches would require the continuation of payments to the EU for a period of time, as mandated by the Lisbon Treaty.

Both approaches have attracted vociferous criticism. The former approach would result in new financial burdens, according to its opponents, especially in the reintroduction of a web of customs duties; currently, over half of exports go to EU member countries and many fear that lost trade revenues would be crippling, at least in the short term. Critics of the soft approach argue that it is simply a cover for "remain" and that Britain will continue to suffer from the limits on global trade imposed by EU membership. For their part, several EU leaders have bluntly stated that the soft pick-and-choose approach will not be ratified by member nations as required under Article 50.

Complicating the negotiations, a third group prefers a "no deal" strategy, in which Article 50 negotiations would completely fail, leaving the door open to an immediate and complete cessation of relationships between Britain and Europe and the end to all payments to the EU. Such an outcome, critics claim, would have disastrous short-term results for the relationships between Britain and Europe, affecting residency rights, customs agreements, tourism, intellectual property, and a host of other areas.

In each of these scenarios, the needs of each member country of the United Kingdom differ quite drastically, complicating the delicate

severing of European relations. Both Scotland and Northern Ireland (with the exception of Paisley's Unionist Party) voted overwhelmingly to remain, and the prospect of this divorce has sparked significant resistance. The Scottish parliament, led by first minister Nicola Sturgeon, voted before the 2017 general election to consider a new referendum on Scottish independence, which is tentatively scheduled for after Brexit goes into effect; a 2014 referendum had resulted in a decisive vote against leaving the United Kingdom, but that vote had been predicated on continued membership in the EU. In Northern Ireland, critics argue that Brexit places in jeopardy the complex relations with the Republic of Ireland: the republic would remain within the EU, while Northern Ireland would be forced to agree to border controls that would likely include "hard" infrastructure between the two countries, eroding the sense of shared culture that had helped form the basis of the Good Friday Agreement of 1998. Even in Wales, which voted in favor of Brexit, a host of uncertainties over agricultural regulation and other trade issues have prompted the government to begin to plan for the no deal option.

ALL ROADS LEAD . . . WHERE?

The uncertainties of the post-Brexit future have shaped, often querulously, the domestic and foreign policies of May's Conservative Party. Proposals and warnings have come thick and fast. Within a single 24-hour period, for example, the European Commission flatly advised European car manufacturers to discontinue use of British-made automotive parts until trade regulations have been renegotiated; the 1.2 million Britons who live and work on the continent pressed for clarity on their post-Brexit freedom of movement within Europe, which they argue is key to their continued economic survival but which will be unilaterally revoked under any Brexit agreement; and Labour confirmed its commitment to a soft Brexit, outlining a model of an "internal market" that would treat the EU as a single partner but would not require Britain to adopt the so-called four freedoms, leaving room for negotiation on the free movement of goods, services, capital, and persons.¹⁰

While most of these issues focus on the economic health of a future Britain, they share a foundation of insecurity, itself the product of significant demographic shifts since 2000. The populism that has fueled such 21st-century phenomena as Brexit and Trump is based on the backward-looking belief that there is a single, unitary, and cohesive identity that is genuinely "British" or solely "American." Its apparent success at the polls has, not unexpectedly, led to significant upticks in

violence against those who don't fit into these identity boxes. In the 12 months after the Brexit vote, for example, the number of reported hate crimes in England and Wales rose by nearly 30 percent.¹¹ In contrast, the number of hate crimes dropped in Scotland, where Leavers were almost nonexistent and racism did not get a boost at the polls.¹²

Juxtaposed against this insularity, however, popular culture has offered visions of a more inclusive Britain. London elected its first practicing Muslim mayor, Sadiq Khan, in 2016, and Gdsml Lall became the first turban-wearing Sikh to "troop the color" in honor of Queen Elizabeth's 92nd birthday celebration. Nowhere was this new vision more apparent in the months after the Brexit referendum than in the May 2018 wedding of American actress Meghan Markle, a biracial woman of color who had been previously married, and Prince Harry. Markle, who wrote passionately about her refusal to tick a box that marked her identity as solely "white" or "black," attracted so much online and print invective even before her engagement to Prince Harry that Kensington Palace was forced to issue a formal statement in November 2016 condemning the "abuse and harassment" directed her way. Supporters eagerly—and prematurely—anticipated the changes that a self-proclaimed feminist would surely introduce into a monarchy defined by centuries of colonialism and patriarchy.

They pointed to innovative moments in the wedding ceremony itself as signals to change. Among the most significant of these innovations was the speech by Rev. Michael Curry, presiding bishop of the Episcopal Church in the United States. Curry, an African American well-known for his infusion of traditional African American preaching styles into the prescriptions of a highly ceremonial church, spoke for 13 minutes on love: "We must discover the power of love, the power, the redemptive power of love," he said. "And when we discover that we will be able to make of this old world a new world."¹³ The sermon, for many, represents a way forward—politically, socially, economically—for Britain in a modern world.

NOTES

1. Andrew Powell, *Unemployment by Ethnic Background* (House of Commons Briefing Paper No. 6385, May 16, 2018), p. 1. These are raw figures, not broken down by gender or family situation, and instead show the numbers of people over 16 self-reporting as "unemployed." See official census records for more granular analysis according to such characteristics as levels of education, health, access to transportation, and language: Office for National Statistics, www.ons.gov.uk.

2. The Statistics Portal, "Internet Penetration of Households in the United Kingdom (UK) from 2000 to 2017" and "Social Media Usage in the United Kingdom (UK)—Statistics & Facts," www.statista.com/statistics/272765/internet-penetration-of-households-in-the-united-kingdom-uk (accessed June 5, 2018).

3. Karla Adam, "Ex-British Prime Minister Tony Blair: The World Is Safer without Saddam Hussein," *Washington Post* (January 30, 2010), <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/01/29/AR2010012904116.html> (accessed June 6, 2018).

4. See, for example, BBC News broadcast, "Iraq Inquiry Hears Defiant Blair Say: I'd Do It Again" (January 29, 2010), <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8485694.stm>.

5. "Tony Blair Is Right: Without the Iraq War There Would Be No Islamic State," *Guardian* (October 25, 2015), <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/oct/25/tony-blair-is-right-without-the-iraq-war-there-would-be-no-isis> (accessed June 6, 2018).

6. David Rennie and Brendan Carlin, "Blair Does a Thatcher to the EU, Only Ruder," *Daily Telegraph* (London: June 24, 2005), <http://subscriber.telegraph.co.uk/archive/2005-6-24.html> (accessed June 6, 2018).

7. Powell gave this speech to a meeting at the Conservative Political Centre in Birmingham on April 20, 1968; see his speeches in Enoch Powell, *Freedom and Reality* (Kingswood: Elliot Right Way Books, 1969).

8. For a collection of these and other campaign materials, see the curated site hosted by the London School of Economics: <http://www.lse.ac.uk/Library/Collections/Collection-highlights/Britain-and-Europe>.

9. Thomas Sampson, "Brexit: The Economics of International Disintegration," *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 31:4, 2017, 163–184.

10. Lisa O'Carroll, "Britons Living in EU Tell MPs They Are Forgotten Victims of Brexit," *Guardian* (June 6, 2018), <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2018/jun/06/britons-living-eu-tell-mps-forgotten-victims-brexit> (accessed June 6, 2018); Anne Perkins, "Labour Reveals Scheme to Maintain Access to EU Single Market," *Guardian* (June 5, 2018), <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2018/jun/05/labour-reveals-scheme-to-maintain-access-to-eu-single-market> (accessed June 6, 2018); Jon Stone, "Brexit: EU Advises Businesses Not to Use British Components Because of Theresa May's Plan to Leave Customs Union," *Independent* (June 6, 2018), <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/brexit-eu-businesses-british-components-theresa-may-customs-union-plan-latest-a8385466.html> (accessed June 6, 2018).

11. Lizzie Deardon, "Hate-Crime Reports Rise by Almost a Third in Year as Home Office Figures Illustrate EU-Referendum Spike," *Independent* (October 17, 2017), <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/hate-crimes-eu-referendum-spike-brexit-terror-attacks-police-home-office-europeans-xenophobia-a8004716.html> (accessed June 6, 2018).
12. "Hate Crimes in Scotland 'Fell after Brexit Vote,'" *Scotsman* (September 22, 2016), <https://www.scotsman.com/news/hate-crimes-in-scotland-fell-after-brexit-vote-1-4237818><https://www.scotsman.com/news/hate-crimes-in-scotland-fell-after-brexit-vote-1-4237818> (accessed June 6, 2018).
13. Margaret Lyons, Anna Schaverien, and Jonah Engel Bromwich, "Bishop Michael Curry's Full Sermon from the Royal Wedding," *New York Times* (May 19, 2018), <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/19/style/bishop-michael-curry-royal-wedding.html> (accessed June 6, 2018).

Notable People in the History of Great Britain

Note: This list excludes monarchs.

Asquith, Herbert Henry, First Earl of Oxford and Asquith (1852–1928), politician. Asquith, a member of the Liberal Party, served as chancellor of the exchequer (1905–1908) and prime minister (1908–1916). As prime minister he presided over the People's Budget, which greatly expanded social welfare programs and introduced an income tax. His government delayed action on women's suffrage and Irish Home Rule on the eve of World War I. He was forced to resign in 1916 over a munitions-supply scandal but remained leader of the party until he retired in 1926.

Attlee, Clement (1883–1957), Labour prime minister, 1945–1951. Attlee served as deputy prime minister under Winston Churchill in the wartime coalition government, 1940–1945. He joined first the Fabians and then the Independent Labour Party, and after serving in World War I, he was elected to Parliament. As prime minister after World War II, he shaped the welfare state that became the hallmark of postwar Britain, as well as the nationalization of key industries and the dismantling of much of the British Empire.

Austen, Jane (1775–1817), novelist. Her six anonymously published novels include *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), *Mansfield Park* (1814) and *Emma* (1816), as well as the posthumously published *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion* (both 1818). Her final unfinished work, *Sanditon*, was published in 1925. Austen, the daughter of an Anglican rector, deployed humor, irony, and realism in her explorations of pressures of economics and social status in the world of the early 19th-century English gentry.

Baldwin, Stanley (1867–1947), Conservative prime minister, 1923–1924, 1924–1929, 1935–1937. Baldwin entered Parliament in 1908; as prime minister he worked to end free trade and introduce protectionist tariffs. During the General Strike of 1926 he pursued a line of conciliation, although by 1927 his cabinet was able to force through the Trade Disputes Act, which contained harsh measures toward strikers. He helped avoid a constitutional crisis when Edward VIII abdicated and retired two weeks after the new king, George VI, was crowned.

Balfour, Arthur James, First Earl of Balfour (1848–1930), Conservative politician. Balfour served as prime minister (1902–1905) and foreign secretary (1916–1919); in the latter capacity, he authored the Balfour Declaration of 1917, announcing support for the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine.

Barnett, Samuel (1844–1913), reformer and philanthropist. Barnett and his wife Henrietta established the first university settlement house, Toynbee Hall, in London's East End in 1884, where university students from Oxford and Cambridge lived and worked among the poor. The Barnetts were involved in a variety of charitable and housing reform movements, including the "garden suburb" movement. Barnett became Canon of Westminster Abbey in 1906.

Becket, Thomas (1119–1170), archbishop of Canterbury 1162–1170; murdered in the cathedral by soldiers of King Henry II, with whom he had quarreled over church and state powers; canonized by Pope Alexander II in 1173.

Bede, the Venerable (ca. 672–735), Benedictine monk whose *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (ca. 731) is the first known written history of the land.

Bentham, Jeremy (1748–1832), political economist, reformer. Bentham founded the philosophical school of utilitarianism, whereby

decisions are made based on assessing “the greatest good for the greatest number.” Using this calculus, Bentham advocated for widespread reforms to law, politics, and education, as well as the expansion of individual liberties under the law that came to represent the bedrock of constitutional freedoms.

Bevan, Aneurin (1897–1960), creator of the National Health Service after 1945. Born into a dissenting Welsh family, Bevan became known as the “socialist soul” of the Labour Party. He broke with the left wing of Labour over the issue of unilateral disarmament in 1957.

Beveridge, William H. (1879–1963), author of the Beveridge Report, a runaway best seller in 1942 outlining the future of a social welfare state in Britain, and a supplementary report in 1945 arguing for full employment as the basis for the welfare state. A social reformer who was closely associated with the Fabians and with the London settlement house of Toynbee Hall, he joined the Board of Trade in 1908 and significantly shaped both the Labour Exchanges Act of 1909 and the National Insurance Act of 1911. He served as director of the London School of Economics from 1919 to 1937.

Blackstone, William (1723–1780), jurist and politician. Blackstone’s magnum opus, the four-volume *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, served as the first codification of the common law of England. The volumes were published between 1765 and 1769.

Blair, Tony Charles Linton (b. 1953), Labour prime minister, 1997–2007. Blair entered Parliament in 1983. He became leader of the Labour Party in 1994 and began to shape the party into a modernized “New Labour.” In 1997 he led Labour in an overwhelming victory at the polls. The reforms of New Labour include the devolution of government for Scotland, Wales, and the localities; an elected Lord Mayor for London; and the abolition of most hereditary peers as members of the House of Lords. His second and third terms were defined by the growing war on terror.

Boleyn, Anne (1501–1536), second wife of Henry VIII. Her refusal to become his mistress became the catalyst for his separation from the Roman Catholic Church and the ensuing English Reformation. Her daughter became Elizabeth I. Boleyn was beheaded after she failed to produce any more children, and Henry charged her with witchcraft and treason.

Booth, Catherine and William (Catherine: 1829–1890; William: 1829–1912), married couple who founded the Salvation Army in London's East End. Both had been expelled from their Wesleyan Methodist communities for their reformism, which included the belief that women could be preachers. In 1865 they opened a mission for the destitute in London; it was renamed the Salvation Army in 1878 and reorganized along a semi-military pattern, providing “soup, soap, and salvation” for the poor.

Booth, Charles (1840–1916), social reformer and writer. Booth's survey of poor neighborhoods in London in the 1880s redefined poverty, using the idea of a “poverty threshold” to show that chronic poverty was due more to structural issues including unemployment and poor housing than to individual moral failure. His extensive research was collated in *Life and Labour of the People in London* (9 volumes, 1892–1897) and helped provide the foundation for sweeping government interventions, including the Old Age Pensions Act of 1908.

Boudicca (also Boadicea or Boudicea; d. 60 or 61 CE), queen of a Celtic tribe, the Iceni, who died leading an uprising against the Romans; British folk hero.

Brougham, Henry Peter, First Baron Brougham and Vaux (1778–1868), reformer, statesman, Lord Chancellor (1830–1834). Brougham, one of the founders of the *Edinburgh Review* (1802), entered London in 1803 and quickly developed a web of influential friendships, winning his first seat in Parliament in 1810. In 1812 he became one of the legal advisors to Queen Caroline, the estranged wife of the prince regent. In 1820 Brougham successfully defended Caroline against divorce proceedings initiated by the prince, now King George IV. Over the course of his career, Brougham advocated the end to slavery in the British colonies, the expansion of the franchise, legal reforms, and the introduction of a system of public education. He helped found the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge in 1825 and designed the four-wheeled brougham carriage.

Cameron, David (b. 1966), Conservative politician. Cameron became party leader in 2005 and served as prime minister, 2010–2016. As a “one-nation” conservative, he led the Conservative campaign in 2016 with a referendum on whether or not the United Kingdom should remain as part of the European Union. His position had been to remain but to make changes that increased British autonomy

over economic and immigration issues. The referendum, nicknamed “Brexit,” gave a surprise victory to those who wanted to leave the EU. Cameron resigned as prime minister a few weeks after the Brexit vote in June 2016 and resigned his seat as MP in September 2016.

Carlyle, Thomas (1795–1881), Scottish philosopher, writer, and public lecturer. Carlyle wrote extensively on “the condition of England question,” critiquing the growth of a middle-class value system and becoming one of the first of the Victorian “sages.” His most important works include *Sartor Resartus* (1833–1834) and *Past and Present* (1843), in which he argued that actual democracy was impossible and hereditary aristocracies were fundamentally decayed.

Cecil, William, First Baron Burghley (1520–1598), chief advisor, secretary of state (1550–1553 and 1558–1572), and Lord High Treasurer (1572–1598) to Elizabeth I. He oversaw the conquest of Ireland and the building of the Royal Navy; after several failed assassination attempts against the queen, he persuaded her to agree to the execution of her Catholic cousin, Mary, Queen of Scots, who had become a lightning rod for conspiracies to overthrow Elizabeth and replace her with a Catholic ruler.

Chadwick, Edwin (1800–1890), social reformer. A utilitarian in philosophical orientation, Chadwick authored the 1834 New Poor Law and helped shape the 1848 Public Health Act, which established municipal sanitary authorities.

Chamberlain, Arthur Neville (1869–1940), prime minister, 1937–1940. Like his father Joseph, Neville Chamberlain also entered politics through service on the Birmingham City Council and won election as MP for Birmingham in 1918. His years as minister of health in 1924–1929 included social services projects such as pensions for widows and orphans, affordable housing, and school meals for poor children. In the 1930s, first as chancellor of the exchequer and then as prime minister, he ended free trade and lowered the income tax. He was the public face of appeasement toward the Nazi regime in the 1930s, a policy that was enormously popular, and his signature on the Munich accords was at first widely acclaimed. By 1939, however, Chamberlain had lost public support and was widely seen as having been outmaneuvered by Hitler; he resigned in 1940 and died shortly thereafter.

Chamberlain, Joseph (1836–1914), politician and imperialist. Initially a Liberal, Chamberlain began his political career in 1874 as city

councilman and then as mayor of Birmingham, where he introduced a program of reforms dubbed “gas-and-water socialism.” He was a tireless advocate of social programs that included slum clearance, free art galleries and libraries, free elementary and secondary education, and municipal ownership of essential services. After 1875 he served as MP for Birmingham. In 1886 he formed the Liberal Unionist Party to oppose Home Rule in Ireland and to support a stronger British presence in Africa and Asia. In 1895, he became colonial secretary under the Conservatives, talking openly about the “white man’s burden” in the colonies.

Churchill, Sir Winston Leonard Spencer (1874–1965), prime minister, 1940–1945, 1951–1955. One of Britain’s most beloved figures, primarily for his work in maintaining British spirit during World War II. A war correspondent in the Boer War, he served in both world wars. He entered Parliament in 1900, becoming First Lord of the Admiralty in 1911 and authoring the disastrous Dardanelles campaign in 1915. His work in the 1920s as colonial secretary included a treaty with the Irish Free State. He spent the years from 1929 through 1939 out of office, writing military histories, and in the early 1930s emerged as a voice of opposition to the Nazis and a counterbalance to appeasement. After the resignation of Neville Chamberlain, he became prime minister of a wartime government. When peace was declared, he served as leader of the opposition and in 1951 returned as prime minister. He resigned the premiership in 1955 but remained in office until 1964.

Cobbe, Frances Power (1822–1904), writer and reformer. Cobbe campaigned for a variety of social reforms, including the end to vivisection, women’s access to higher education, and female suffrage.

Colenso, John William, Bishop of Natal (1814–1883), Anglican prelate and biblical scholar whose work led him to openly doubt the literal truth of much of the Old Testament; his position as the first bishop of Natal also inspired him to advocate for the Zulu tribes against the Dutch Afrikaners in South Africa. His treatises on the Pentateuch led to scandal in the Anglican Church, and he survived an attempt to eject him from his bishopric. He was a polygenist, arguing that the races were the result of different acts of divine creation.

Collins, Michael (1890–1922), Irish revolutionary leader. After participating in the Easter Rising of 1916, he became one of the leaders of

the Irish Volunteers. Under his direction the group became the Irish Republican Army and began a guerrilla campaign against British politicians and others who opposed Irish independence. He helped negotiate the Anglo-Irish treaty that established the Irish Free State in 1922 but was assassinated that same year.

Cranmer, Thomas (1489–1556), archbishop of Canterbury 1533–1555. He oversaw the ecclesiastical reforms that led to the separation from the Roman Catholic Church and the establishment of the liturgy and ceremonies of the English Church, and wrote the first two editions of the *Book of Common Prayer*. Under Mary I, he was found guilty of treason and heresy and ultimately burned at the stake.

Cromwell, Oliver (1599–1658), MP, general of the New Model Army during the English Civil War, and later Lord Protector of Britain. One of the most prominent of the parliamentarians or “roundheads” during the civil war, Cromwell signed the death warrant of King Charles I and spent the years until 1651 in continuous and ruthless military campaigns in Ireland and Scotland. In 1653, he and his army council ejected the remaining MPs, and he became the leader of a military regime. By 1654, he had become Lord Protector. His regime was characterized by military discipline and military expense, an emphasis on godly living, and growing resentment by civilians. In 1660, as part of the Restoration settlement, the bodies of Cromwell and the other regicides were dug up and displayed as traitors by the new king, Charles II.

Cromwell, Thomas (ca. 1485–1540), minister under Henry VIII, presided over the break with Rome and the formation of the English church. He used Parliament to formulate the series of laws establishing the royal supremacy, thereby giving Parliament a strong sense of political importance. Cromwell managed not only the end of Henry’s marriage to Catherine of Aragon but also the conviction and execution of Anne Boleyn, Henry’s second wife. His matchmaking for wife number three, Anne of Cleves, was carried out in pursuit of alliances with Protestant powers on the continent but led to his downfall and execution when Henry found the candidate distasteful and the political policies treasonous.

Darwin, Charles (1809–1882), natural scientist and author of the 1859 *Origin of Species*, which outlined the theory of evolution by natural selection. Darwin’s voyages on the HMS *Beagle* in 1831–1836 provided him with ample evidence of evolutionary change. Not until 1881

did he address the role of evolution in human history, in his *Descent of Man*.

de Valera, Eamon (1882–1975), Irish nationalist, taoiseach (prime minister) (1932–1948, 1951–1954, 1957–1959), and president (1959–1973) of the Irish Free State. de Valera was the only surviving leader of the Easter Rising of 1916 and after release from jail began working toward the complete independence of Ireland from Great Britain. He became president of the Irish Dáil, or parliament, in 1919 but refused to attend the peace talks with Britain at the end of the Anglo-Irish War, instead insisting that any partition into a southern republic and a British Northern Ireland was unacceptable. He won the 1932 elections as leader of the Fianna Fail Party, after which the Irish constitution was altered to omit allegiance to the British Crown.

Dickens, Charles John Huffam (1812–1870), novelist and social critic. Dickens was a prolific author, producing journalism, drama, and fiction mostly about London. He combined realism and vivid expressionism in his novels, often choosing a social problem—the law, the prison system, the civil service—as an organizing focus for his work. His first big success was *The Pickwick Papers*, and his early, more sentimental novels such as *Nicholas Nickleby* were followed by darker, more complex works such as *Bleak House* and *Little Dorrit*. Many of his novels were serialized in journals edited by Dickens (*Household Words*) or his friends, catering to the growing reading public and especially to the novel-reading habits of middle-class men and women.

Disraeli, Benjamin, First Earl of Beaconsfield (1804–1881), politician, prime minister (1874–1880), and novelist. Disraeli is famous for referring to Victorian politics as “a climb to the top of the greasy pole,” but it took him many years to reach the top. His early adulthood was spent in writing “silver fork” novels about the aristocracy. In 1837 he became a Conservative MP but did not succeed in gaining significant influence within the party until the mid-1840s. He served as the leader of the Conservative Party in the Commons under the Earl of Derby, serving as chancellor of the exchequer in Derby’s governments of 1852, 1858–1859, and 1866–1868. As prime minister, he presided over the acquisition of the Suez Canal and the declaration of Victoria as empress of India. Despite his lifelong membership in the Anglican Church, his Jewish heritage made him suspect to many Britons, and his flair for self-aggrandizement was further proof that he was in many ways more exotic than English.

Doyle, Arthur Conan (1859–1930), Scottish physician and novelist. His best-known creation, the consulting detective Sherlock Holmes, debuted in 1887 in *A Study in Scarlet*. Holmes was featured in 4 novels and more than 50 short stories and inspired fan clubs around the world. Doyle also wrote historical fiction, fantasy, and science fiction. He was a reform-minded imperialist and subscribed to spiritualism and freemasonry. He received a knighthood in 1902.

Drake, Sir Francis (ca. 1540–1596), privateer and slave trader who ultimately became vice admiral of the Royal Navy under Elizabeth I. With the Earl of Essex, he carried out the 1575 Massacre of Rathlin Island, off the coast of Ireland, in which 200 Irish troops and 400 Irish civilians were slaughtered. He became the second man to circumnavigate the globe (1577–1580). His skilled piracy directed at Spanish trading ships encouraged Philip II to launch the Spanish Armada in 1588, but Drake, as second in command of the English navy, helped lead the English to victory. He died off the coast of San Juan, Puerto Rico, in a failed attempt to take the island for Elizabeth.

Eden, Anthony, First Earl of Avon (1897–1977), Conservative politician. Eden succeeded Winston Churchill as prime minister in 1955. Eden, working secretly with Israel and France, ordered the invasion of Egypt to regain control of the Suez Canal, which had been nationalized by Nasser. The crisis, part of the overall decay of relations on the Arabian Peninsula, cost Britain significant international standing and forced Eden out of office in January 1957.

Farage, Nigel (b. 1964), politician. Farage, originally a member of the Conservative Party, joined the UK Independence Party (UKIP) in 1993, gaining a seat as member of the European Parliament in 1999. He was an outspoken promoter of “Brexit” and resigned as leader of UKIP after the successful referendum, although he remains a member of the European Parliament. He has supported a variety of right-wing political candidates in Europe and the United States and is a frequent guest on Fox News, the far-right news and entertainment company in the United States.

Fawcett, Millicent Garrett (1847–1929), writer and reformer. Fawcett was a campaigner for women’s suffrage and worked for women’s higher education, cofounding Newnham College, Cambridge, in 1875. Her later work opened up local political offices to women. In 1901, she headed up a government commission to investigate the state of

concentration camps established by the British during the second Boer War, confirming reports of disease and death due to neglect in the camps. She was knighted in 1925.

Fawkes, Guy (1570–1606), English Catholic who helped plan the failed Gunpowder Plot to blow up the houses of Parliament, assassinate James I, and replace him with his Catholic daughter, Elizabeth Stuart. Authorities were alerted to the plot via an anonymous letter, and the plotters were tortured and executed. Celebration of the failure on the annual Guy Fawkes Day, November 5, includes burning an effigy of Fawkes, a “guy” created by neighborhood children from old clothes and cast-offs.

Gandhi, Mohandas “Mahatma” (1869–1948), activist. Educated in the law, Gandhi fought for the independence of India from Britain and introduced nonviolent civil disobedience as a tool for achieving reform. He advocated religious toleration in an independent India and was assassinated by a rival Hindu Indian nationalist in 1948, a few months after the subcontinent was partitioned into India and Pakistan and granted independence.

Gaskell, Elizabeth Cleghorn (1810–1865), novelist, poet, and essayist. Gaskell wrote her first novel, *Mary Barton*, after the death of her infant son in 1845. A sympathetic examination of the effects of industrial and factory life on working-class families, it was an immediate success. Among her other novels are *Ruth* and *Cranford* (both 1853) and *North and South* (1855); she also published *The Life of Charlotte Bronte* (1857), the first biography of the author. Her novels explore domestic life and often include strong deliberate messages of cross-class empathy.

Gladstone, William Ewart (1809–1898), politician, prime minister (1868–1874, 1880–1885, 1886, 1892–1894), and author. Gladstone entered Parliament in 1832, beginning a long parliamentary career that included several terms as chancellor of the exchequer. By the mid-1860s he advocated radical reforms from within the Liberal Party, supporting such measures as an expanded franchise, the abolition of church rates (taxes), the disestablishment of the state church, and eventually Home Rule for Ireland. His administrations also pushed through sweeping reforms in education, the military, and landownership in Ireland, as well as the secret ballot. His moral rectitude informed both his domestic and foreign policies, as seen in his Midlothian campaign, where he

called for recognition of the equal rights of all nations. Despite his own personal convictions, he was pressured by his party to support the expansion of the British Empire into Africa and the Pacific.

Griffith, Arthur (1871–1922), Irish politician and writer. Griffith founded Sinn Féin in 1905 as a political party devoted to Irish independence and led the Irish delegation that negotiated with the British in 1921 to establish the Irish Free State.

Hardie, James Keir (1856–1915), Scottish trade unionist and politician. He founded the Labour Party and became its first elected MP. He was an advocate for Indian self-rule, the end to South African segregation, and conscientious objection to war.

Heath, Sir Edward (b. 1916), prime minister, 1970–1974. Heath entered Parliament as a Conservative MP in 1950, holding various offices in the shadow cabinet during Labour's long tenure. As prime minister, he had to deal with such difficult issues as the escalation of violence in Northern Ireland, the international oil crisis, rampant inflation and unemployment, and the controversial decision to enter Britain in the European Economic Community (EEC).

Hogarth, William (1697–1764), artist. Hogarth was an engraver and illustrator of “scenes of contemporary life,” most of which were situated in London. He became famous for his narrative sequences that carried moral and social messages, among which were *The Rake's Progress*, *Marriage a la Mode*, and *Beer Street/Gin Lane*.

Huxley, Thomas Henry (1825–1895), biologist. Known as “Darwin's bulldog,” Huxley became the public face of Darwin's theories of evolution by natural selection, famously sparring with prelate Samuel Wilberforce at the 1860 meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, where Wilberforce asked Huxley which of his grandparents was descended from the primates. Huxley became a powerful public intellectual, advocating for the teaching of science in schools and publishing widely in popular journals. One of his best-known essays, *Evolution and Ethics*, argued that rather than promoting the social Darwinist notion of “survival of the fittest,” human ethical systems allow society “to fit the most people to survive.”

Keynes, John Maynard, First Baron Keynes (1883–1946), economist. Keynes formulated a theory of economics that emphasized the

importance of consumption rather than savings and helped craft the policies of the post-1945 welfare state.

Khan, Sadiq (b. 1970), Labour politician. In 2016, Khan was elected mayor of London, the first member of an ethnic minority to gain that office. Born in London into a working-class Pakistani family, Khan is also one of few practicing Muslims in local political office. Khan was a strong opponent of the decision to leave the EU.

Knox, John (ca. 1513–1572), Scottish minister. Knox, a Calvinist, returned to England in 1549 after having been captured by the French in 1547. He became a royal chaplain to King Edward VI, helping craft a Calvinist-oriented *Book of Common Prayer*. He fled to Geneva, Switzerland, when Edward died and Mary I ascended. By the time of his return from Geneva in 1559, he had broken with the Church of England over liturgy and theology. He returned to Scotland, where with five others he wrote the *Scots Confession*, which formed the theological foundation of the reformed Presbyterian Church, or Kirk. Between 1559 and 1566 he wrote the five-volume *History of the Reformation in Scotland*.

Laud, William, archbishop of Canterbury (1573–1645). Laud sought to reinvigorate church ceremonies and liturgies and to erode the growing popularity of the Calvinist practices of the Puritans. A close advisor to Charles I, he strongly supported the divine right absolutism espoused by the king. The 1640 Long Parliament impeached him for treason; he was sent to the Tower of London and executed in 1645.

Lloyd George, David (1863–1945), prime minister, 1916–1922. As leader of the coalition government during World War I, Lloyd George made sweeping changes in the role of government in the life of the ordinary citizen, increasing centralized control and direction in order to marshal military and other resources. As chancellor of the exchequer before the war, his “People’s Budget” introduced the progressive income tax to fund old-age pensions and military expansion. He presided over the 1918 Representation of the People Act enfranchising women, as well as the settlement with the Irish Free State.

Locke, John (1632–1704), physician and Enlightenment philosopher whose *Two Treatises on Government* (written in the 1670s–1680s, published in 1689) provided the theoretical justifications for the Glorious Revolution and the forced abdication of James II on the grounds that

he had broken the social contract between governed and governor. Locke's *Letters Concerning Toleration* (1689–1692) argued for religious tolerance, while his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690) postulated the theory of the mind as a *tabula rasa*, or blank slate, written on through experience.

MacDonald, James Ramsay (1866–1937), prime minister, 1924, 1929–1931, 1931–1935. MacDonald helped shape the modern Labour Party as a party working to build a socialist future through parliamentary means. He joined the Independent Labour Party in the 1890s and in 1903 helped form the coalition with the Liberals that enabled the Labourites to win 24 seats, including his own, in the 1906 election. MacDonald opposed Britain's entry into World War I and lost his seat but reentered Parliament in 1922 and was subsequently elected leader of the Labour Party. He became the first Labour prime minister.

Macmillan, Maurice Harold, First Earl of Stockton (1894–1986), Conservative politician. Macmillan was chancellor of the exchequer under Anthony Eden (1955–1957) and prime minister (1957–1963). A Keynesian in economic orientation, Macmillan presided over a period of widespread affluence and also oversaw significant decolonization, especially in sub-Saharan Africa.

Major, John (b. 1943), prime minister, 1990–1997. Major replaced Margaret Thatcher as leader of the Conservative Party and as prime minister, continuing most of Thatcher's policies but ending such hated innovations as the poll tax. Under his administration, Britain left the ERM (Exchange Rate Mechanism) and suffered new highs in unemployment, tax increases, and deficit spending. Major signed the Maastricht Treaty in 1992 despite the Conservatives' ambivalence about closer relations with Europe, an ambivalence that continued to grow during such crises as the bovine spongiform encephalopathy episode, where Europe closed its doors to British beef over fears of "mad cow disease." Even the peace talks he brokered in Northern Ireland broke down when Ulster Unionists feared betrayal by Westminster. And the public reacted negatively to changes in the National Health Service under Major. All of these episodes helped spell a disastrous defeat for the Conservatives in 1997.

Malthus, Thomas Robert (1766–1834), cleric and political economist. Malthus's most famous ideas concern population: he argued that agricultural and other innovations have raised the productivity of

farmland to its highest point but that population will always outstrip food production, leading to a chronic gap between the amount of food produced and the number of mouths to feed. "Checks on population," he argued, took the form of famine, disease, and war and could not be avoided. In the later editions of his 1798 *Essay on the Principles of Population*, Malthus would argue that emigration could also be used to ease population pressures.

Markle, Meghan, Duchess of Sussex (b. 1981), American actress. Markle married Prince Harry in May 2018, drawing intense public scrutiny for her race (she is biracial) and her personal life (she was previously married).

Marlowe, Christopher (1564–1593), playwright, poet, and probable spy under Elizabeth I. His most successful dramas include *Tamburlaine the Great*, *The Jew of Malta*, and *The Tragedy of Dr. Faustus*. He and his circle were referred to as The School of Night and connected with atheism; his associates in this group included explorer and courtier Sir Walter Raleigh, scientist Thomas Harriot, and scholar George Chapman.

May, Theresa (b. 1956), Conservative politician. She was first elected MP in 1997 and became prime minister in 2016, after the resignation of David Cameron. One of her first acts was to refuse a second referendum on the decision to leave the European Union; she triggered Article 50 of the Treaty of Lisbon, which governs the EU, on March 20, 2017, starting the two-year process toward exit.

Mill, John Stuart (1806–1873), utilitarian and liberal philosopher. Mill was the product of a peculiar childhood, educated by his father in accordance with the tenets of "philosophical radicalism" first postulated by Jeremy Bentham. He served in the East India Company for 35 years and then was elected as MP in 1865; during his three years in Parliament he unsuccessfully worked for women's suffrage. He advocated a combination of free-market philosophy and some governmental controls on the economy, and also, in *On Liberty* (1859), wrote eloquently about the uses of personal freedom to ensure the overall health of a society. He argued for controlled participatory democracy, calling for the extension of education in order to prepare an intelligent electorate.

More, Hannah (1745–1833), Evangelical reformer, philanthropist, and author. More began her intellectual career as a poet and

playwright, moving into religious writing after her entry into the circle of Evangelical reformers that included William Wilberforce. She is best known for writing over half of the 200 *Cheap Repository Tracts* that were published between 1795 and 1817 to provide reading material for the literate poor, praising such virtues as thrift and hard work while deplored vice and generally emphasizing a socially and politically conservative worldview. The series of tracts was wildly successful, selling hundreds of thousands of copies. She and her sister founded a dozen schools for poor children, but she also adamantly resisted higher education for girls and women.

More, Sir Thomas (1478–1535), legal scholar and humanist, opposed the English Reformation and was executed as a traitor when he refused to swear the oath of allegiance to Henry VIII. His most influential writing on social reforms was *Utopia* (1516), which described an imaginary balanced and equitable society, and his religious writings included a series of treatises in which he refuted the theological arguments of Martin Luther. He was canonized in 1935 by Pope Pius XI.

Morris, William (1834–1896), novelist, translator, socialist reformer, artist, and designer in the British Arts and Crafts style. Morris, a member of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood of artists established in 1848 by John Ruskin, abandoned the medium of paint by 1862 in order to focus on furniture and textile design. His textile and wallpaper designs, reflecting Nordic, Welsh, and medieval influences, were produced using organic dyes and handcraft techniques. He married Jane Burden, one of the most famous of the Pre-Raphaelite models, in 1859. Morris joined the newly fledged Democratic Federation, England's first socialist party, in 1883, and helped found the more politically cohesive Socialist League in 1884, eventually embracing both Marxism and anarchism. His political beliefs are reflected in his utopian novel, the 1890 *News from Nowhere*.

Murdoch, Keith Rupert (b. 1931), Australian media owner. Murdoch entered the British newspaper world in 1968 when he purchased the daily *News of the World*. He bought the daily *Sun* in 1969, reinventing it as a tabloid paper, and *The Times* and *The Sunday Times* in 1981. His media empire includes newspapers and television stations in the United Kingdom, the United States, and Australia. In July 2011, Murdoch was named in a court case involving an extensive campaign of phone hacking by News International, Murdoch's British newspaper group, that targeted politicians, entertainers, members of the

royal family, families of deceased soldiers, and victims of the July 2005 London terrorist bombings. In one case, the cell phone of a murdered child, Milly Dowler, was hacked. Within days, advertising boycotts led to the closure of the *News of the World*, and Murdoch was forced to withdraw his takeover bid for BSkyB, a subscription television service.

Nash, John (1752–1835), architect. A favorite of the prince regent, Nash designed the Royal Pavilion at Brighton, Buckingham Palace, Regent Street, Regent's Park, the Marble Arch, and a dozen castles and stately homes in the countryside of England and Ireland.

Newman, John Henry (1801–1890), theologian. Newman was a principal figure in the Oxford Movement, a campaign to reinfuse the Anglican Church with ceremony and reestablish its roots with Roman Catholicism. In 1845 he converted to Catholicism, eventually becoming a cardinal in the church. He helped found the Catholic University of Ireland (now University College Dublin) and produced treatises, poetry, and a spiritual autobiography. He was beatified in 2010.

Newton, Sir Isaac (1642–1727), scientist. Newton's 1687 *Principia Mathematica* was the basis for what was later dubbed "the Newtonian synthesis," working out the laws of space, time, and motion in order to form a unified theory of physics that included the notion of gravity as a force that operated across empty space to hold the universe in place.

Norton, Caroline (1808–1877), writer and reformer. Norton married barrister George Norton in 1827, and his alcoholism and chronic unemployment led to a disastrous union. He accused her of adultery and sued unsuccessfully for divorce in 1836, naming the prime minister, Viscount Melbourne, as co-respondent. The couple separated, but she could not legally obtain a divorce, could not legally gain access to their three sons, and could not retain any income she made with her writing. Over the next two decades she worked tirelessly to change the laws, resulting in the eventual passage of the Custody of Infants Act (1839), the Matrimonial Causes Act (1857), and the Married Women's Property Act (1870).

O'Connell, Daniel (1775–1847), Irish politician who campaigned for Catholic emancipation. He was elected to Parliament in 1828 but could not take his seat because he was a Catholic; the following year, the government ended discrimination against Catholics. In 1830 O'Connell launched the Repeal Association to campaign for the repeal

of the 1801 Act of Union, holding enormous political rallies he called “monster meetings.” He was arrested and sentenced to prison in 1843 after one such meeting but was released after three months when his trial was found to have been unfair. The monster meeting was outlawed, however, which resulted in the eventual dissolution of the Repeal Association and O’Connell’s retirement; he died on a trip to Italy.

O’Connor, Feargus (1794–1855), Chartist. O’Connor was an Irish politician elected to Parliament in 1832; he helped lead the Chartist movement during its most active phase. He edited the national Chartist newspaper, *The Northern Star*, and supported the Chartist Land Plan, which called for the relocation of urban working people to small holdings in the countryside.

Orwell, George (1903–1950), writer. Born Eric Arthur Blair, he adopted his pen name in 1933 with the publication of *Down and Out in Paris and London*. Orwell famously described his upbringing as “lower-upper-middle class,” and his essays and novels focus on issues of class identity, poverty, empire, and politics. His 1937 *Road to Wigan Pier* explored poverty and class in the depressed coal country, while the 1939 *Homage to Catalonia* recounted his experiences in the Spanish Civil War. His most famous novels, *Animal Farm* (1945) and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949), portrayed totalitarian societies. He also wrote dozens of essays, one of which—“Politics and the English Language” (1946)—became a classic paean to clear writing as a defense against political oppression.

Owen, Robert (1771–1858), Welsh textile manufacturer. In 1799, he purchased his father-in-law’s factory in New Lanark, Scotland, and transformed it into a model of what he called “cooperative socialism” or “utopian socialism,” a system of labor and industry that rejected the evils of competition and instead focused on humane standards of living and compensation for employees. He and his sons founded New Harmony, Indiana, in 1825 as a utopian community, a model that inspired numerous other communities in America and Britain. Owen returned to England and advocated for political and economic reforms, including trades unions, male suffrage, and limits on child labor; he started what became the international cooperative movement.

Owen, Wilfred (1893–1918), poet. Owen enlisted in World War I and wrote extensively about the horrors of gas and trench warfare.

He died at the front in 1918, a week before the armistice ending the war was signed. His war poems, most published posthumously, include "Anthem for Doomed Youth," "Futility," "Dulce Et Decorum Est" ("It Is Sweet and Honorable"), and "The Parable of the Old Men and the Young."

Paisley, Ian, Baron Bannside (1926–2014), Irish politician. Paisley, a Protestant Evangelical minister, supported the cause of Irish Unionism. He entered Parliament in 1970 and founded the Democratic Union Party in 1971. He opposed all attempts to negotiate an end to the Troubles in Northern Ireland, helping create the Ulster Resistance militia in 1986. In 2007, after reluctantly agreeing to the terms of the 2006 St. Andrews Agreement which established a devolved government in Northern Ireland, Paisley became first minister, an office he held until 2008. He retired from politics in 2011. Notorious for his political and religious invective, he once accused the Queen Mother and Princess Margaret of "fornicating with the Antichrist" for meeting with Pope John XXIII.

Pankhurst, Emmeline (1858–1928), suffragist and political activist. Pankhurst formed the Women's Social and Political Union in 1903 and advocated violence against property (not persons) as a means to achieve female suffrage. The suffragettes, as they were known, smashed windows, chained themselves to the visitors' gallery in the House of Commons, etched "Votes for Women" on the greens of golf courses, and behaved in ways that would end in their arrests; once in jail, they staged hunger strikes until the authorities adopted force-feeding, resulting in injuries and even deaths. The negative publicity of the force-feeding led to the passage of the Prisoners (Temporary Discharge for Ill Health) Act 1913, popularly referred to as the Cat and Mouse Act, which permitted the discharge and then rearrest of hunger strikers. The campaign for women's suffrage was put on hold with the outbreak of war in 1914, and Pankhurst joined the Order of the White Feather, whose aim was to shame conscientious objectors into joining the military. Women were granted the vote in 1918.

Parnell, Charles Stewart (1846–1891), Irish nationalist and politician. Parnell entered Parliament in 1875 and became president of the Irish Land League in 1879. His work helped shape Gladstone's first Home Rule Bill in 1886. Parnell's political career ended disastrously with the divorce case brought against him by a former colleague, the husband of his long-time mistress Kitty O'Shea.

Peel, Sir Robert (1788–1850), prime minister, 1834–1835, 1841–1846. Peel entered Parliament in 1809 as a Tory. He opposed Catholic emancipation personally but ushered through the bill, which ended disabilities for Catholics; he also opposed the Reform Act of 1832 but conceded that cautious reform under a Tory ministry was necessary. He lowered the tariffs on imported foodstuffs, eventually spearheading the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846.

Pitt, William, First Earl of Chatham (1708–1778), Whig statesman under George III and prime minister 1766–1768. He served for decades in the House of Commons, refusing title until 1766. He helped manage the victory over the French in the Seven Years' War and enthusiastically advocated for the spread of empire. His son, William Pitt, "The Younger," became one of the most powerful of British prime ministers.

Pitt, William, "The Younger" (1759–1806), Tory statesman who held the offices of prime minister (1783–1801, 1804–1806) and chancellor of the exchequer (1804–1806). The youngest man to become prime minister, he assumed the office at the end of the War of American Independence and oversaw the period of the French Revolution and the wars against France and Napoleon. He engineered the 1801 Act of Union, which unified the United Kingdom and Ireland.

Pope, Alexander (1688–1744), poet and writer. Pope's best-known work, *The Rape of the Lock* (1712) is a mock-epic that satirized an emerging culture of conspicuous consumption; the *Dunciad* (1728–1743) satirized the decay of English culture and intellect under George II; and the *Essay on Man* (1732–1734) attempted to "vindicate the ways of God to man." Pope's translation of Homer's *Illiad* and *Odyssey* received only lukewarm praise.

Powell, John Enoch (1912–1998), politician. He entered Parliament in 1950 as a Conservative, serving as minister of health (1960–1963), and grew increasingly right wing as the empire was being decolonized. He warned against immigration from the former colonies, stirring up hatred and violence in speeches and essays; his most famous speech, in 1968, warned of the "rivers of blood" that would inevitably follow the newly passed Race Relations Act, which criminalized racial discrimination in housing. He abandoned the Conservative Party over British membership in the EEC and joined the Ulster Unionist Party in 1974, serving as MP for South Down until 1987. Although he rejected the label of "racist," he became the de facto leader of extreme

nationalism in Britain and consistently warned that immigration from former colonies would lead to civil war.

Raleigh, Sir Walter (ca. 1554–1618), courtier, poet, explorer, and spy under Elizabeth I. Knighted in 1585 for service to the crown, he received the patent to explore what would become the colony of Virginia and also sailed to present-day Guyana and Venezuela in search of the riches of the mythical El Dorado. Embroiled in the political intrigues to determine Elizabeth's successor, he backed the losing candidate and was arrested for his participation in a plot to replace James I with James's cousin, Arabella Stuart. Raleigh was found guilty of treason, but James commuted his sentence to imprisonment in the Tower of London. In 1617, after a royal pardon, he embarked on another trip to South America, attacked a Spanish outpost in direct violation of existing treaties, and was arrested and executed.

Rowling, Joanne "J.K." (b. 1965), author. Rowling was a single mother living in poverty when she published the first book in the Harry Potter series, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (in the U.S. version, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*) in 1997. The six-book series has sold over 400 million copies and been translated into multiple languages and onto film. She has also written four books for adults, three under the pen name Robert Galbraith. The Harry Potter series details the life of a young English boy who discovers on his 11th birthday that he is a wizard and over the course of the novels prepares to confront Lord Voldemort, "he-who-shall-not-be-named," and save the wizarding world.

Rowntree, Benjamin Seebohm (1871–1954), author of the influential 1901 *Poverty: A Study of Town Life*. Rowntree examined the presence of poverty in 1900 York and concluded that it could be divided into two categories: primary poverty, defined as the lack of some necessity of life such as fuel, clothing, food, or shelter, occurring no matter how careful the family was about expenditure; and secondary poverty, defined as the lack of money for anything beyond the bare necessities, such as medicine. His study helped change the thinking about poverty, eroding the notion that the poor were only poor because they did not work hard enough or save carefully enough.

Ruskin, John (1819–1900), artist, art critic, poet, and essayist. Ruskin began to redefine the role of the art critic in 1843, with an essay extolling painter J.M.W. Turner's "truth to nature." He argued that the artist's responsibility was to reflect the reality of nature, not to invent

it in the studio, and he joined that claim with an increasingly powerful argument that art ought to be available to all, not simply to the wealthy. In the 1849 *Seven Lamps of Architecture* he identified the seven "moral truths" of the artist as sacrifice, truth, power, beauty, life, memory, and obedience, attracting the members of the new Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood of artists. He also taught art within the Working Men's College movement founded by Christian socialist F. D. Maurice. In his later essays he explored ideas of a more equitable and just society, most notably in the 1860 *Unto This Last*. In 1869 he was appointed the first Slade Professor of Fine Art at Oxford University, and in 1871 he founded the Ruskin School of Drawing and Fine Art at Oxford.

Shakespeare, William (1564–1616), playwright and poet, and author of over 40 plays and numerous sonnets and sonnet cycles. His history plays explored the ways in which the Tudors and Stuarts used power and myth as tools of governance; his tragedies and comedies became increasingly complex reflections of an often-violent Elizabethan and Jacobean culture.

Simpson, Wallis Warfield (1896–1986), American socialite whose love affair with Edward VIII led him to abdicate the throne in 1936. He was denied permission by the Church of England to marry Simpson, who had been twice divorced. The relationship ushered in the abdication crisis of 1936 and led to the accession of Edward's brother as George VI. Simpson and her husband, granted the titles of Duke and Duchess of Windsor after the abdication and their marriage, met with Adolf Hitler in 1937 and were suspected Nazi sympathizers.

Smiles, Samuel (1812–1904), Scottish author and reformer. An early radical, he edited the *Leeds Times* from 1839 through 1848, supporting the Chartist movement and its agitation for parliamentary reforms; he also supported women's suffrage and free trade. Beginning in 1859, and reflecting a turn away from state-sponsored reformism, Smiles produced a series of best sellers celebrating the characteristics that would allow the individual to rise and prosper in the context of Victorian economic and social changes. These included *Self-Help* (1859), *Character* (1871), *Thrift* (1875), and *Duty* (1880). He also produced a five-volume *Lives of the Engineers* (1862) and a variety of biographies of inventors and industrialists.

Smith, Adam (1723–1790), economist and philosopher. Smith's 1776 *Wealth of Nations* condemned the economic theories and practices

of mercantilism and instead advocated a relatively “laissez-faire,” or free-market, economy, devoid of unnecessary government interference. Smith postulated an “invisible hand” directing the marketplace, the result of competition among individuals and healthy self-interest as a motivating force among consumers and producers.

Spencer, Diana, Princess of Wales (1961–1997), first wife of Prince Charles. Known posthumously as “the people’s princess,” Diana’s extensive charity work, especially in the areas of HIV/AIDS and raising international awareness about landmines, was less riveting to the public than her obvious unhappiness within the royal family. She spoke openly about her eating disorders and depression, winning a level of public affection that most other members of the family did not enjoy. She and Charles divorced in 1996. She was killed along with her companion, Dodi Fayed, in a car accident in 1997.

Spencer, Herbert (1820–1903), philosopher, sociologist, and political theorist. Spencer sought to integrate the precepts of evolution into the new field of sociology and posited a theory of social evolution that argued societies grew more complex over time and that societies, like individuals, competed with one another for resources and power. He coined the phrase “survival of the fittest” and, in what became known as “social Darwinism,” argued that the provision of social welfare benefits permitted the weak to survive and reproduce, threatening the overall health of a society.

Stopes, Marie (1880–1958), author, scientist, and reformer. Author of *Married Love and Wise Parenthood: A Book for Married People* (both 1918), she lectured openly about contraception and founded the first birth control clinic in Britain in 1921 with the help of American eugenicist Margaret Sanger. She shared Sanger’s enthusiasm for eugenics but was staunchly opposed to abortion. She founded an additional five “mothers’ clinics” in England and Scotland in the 1930s and 1940s; these were enfolded into Marie Stopes International, a nongovernmental organization dedicated to women’s reproductive health, in 1975.

Sturgeon, Nicola (b. 1970), Scottish politician. In 2014, Sturgeon became the first minister of the devolved government of Scotland and the leader of the Scottish National Party. She is the first woman to serve in either of those positions. In 2016, Sturgeon won reelection and announced that, given Scotland’s overwhelming “Remain” vote in Brexit, she intends to schedule another referendum on Scottish independence after Brexit takes effect in March 2019.

Thatcher, Margaret (1925–2013), prime minister, 1979–1990. Thatcher, the first woman prime minister of Britain, presided over a series of radical changes in government known as the “Thatcher Revolution.” Her economic policies focused on lowering interest rates and taxes, and she systematically worked to undo the welfare state created by Clement Attlee after 1945, privatizing nationalized industries and advocating what she called small-scale capitalism through the purchase by ordinary men and women of shares in these former nationalized industries. A Europhobe, Thatcher opposed entry into any formal European community, although she was forced to accede to demands for entry into the European Exchange Rate Mechanism at the end of her administration. Her popularity soared during the Falklands War (1982) but plummeted at the introduction of the poll tax (1989–1990).

Tyler, Wat (d. 1381), led the Peasants’ Revolt in 1381, protesting against a new poll tax and for the end to serfdom. Rebels entered London, destroyed tax records, freed prisoners, and killed officers of the law. Captured and executed as a traitor, Tyler became an important figure in popular culture.

Villiers, George, First Duke of Buckingham (1592–1628), courtier and favorite of King James VI. James gave him control over court patronage, and he expanded the patronage system to include the sale of the rank of baronet, a heritable noble title, to raise cash for the Crown. A close friend to the young Charles I, he helped set the stage for wars with Spain and France; he survived attempts by Parliament to impeach him and was assassinated by a disgruntled army officer.

Wallace, William (ca. 1270–1305), knight who became one of the leaders in the First Scottish War of Independence (1296–1328). Captured in 1305, he was hanged, drawn, and quartered by the English and became a significant heroic figure in popular culture.

Walpole, Sir Robert (1676–1745), chief minister and first lord of the Treasury (1721–1741). Walpole entered Parliament in 1701 and became a valued member of the Whig Party, serving as secretary of war and treasurer of the navy. He was impeached and expelled by the Tories and then regained office when George I ascended. Walpole was known for his financial acumen (he helped rescue the country from the financial disaster of the South Sea Bubble) as well as his skillful use of patronage; he helped develop the cabinet system, and he fought viciously against the continued threat of Jacobitism.

Webb, Beatrice and Sydney (Beatrice: 1858–1943; Sydney: 1859–1947), social reformers. Together they helped found the Fabian Society in 1884, advocating the gradual transition to a democratic socialist government. Fabians were never a separate political party but instead worked closely with the Labour Party. In 1895 the Webbs founded the London School of Economics, and the 1909 *Minority Report to the Royal Commission*, authored by Beatrice, helped frame what would become the welfare state. Sydney served as secretary of state for the colonies and secretary of state for the dominions in 1929. Both Webbs supported the Soviet Union until their deaths.

Wentworth, Thomas, First Earl of Strafford (1593–1641), statesman and lord deputy of Ireland (1632–1640). He was a vigorous promoter of the Crown's interests in Ireland, but his arbitrary exercise of power earned him wide dislike. Charles I recalled him from Ireland in 1639 to help negotiate peace with the Scots after the First Bishops' War (1639), and he was impeached along with Laud in 1640 and charged with treason. This charge was replaced by the innovative charge of "constructive treason," that is, acting to turn the king's subjects against him. After Strafford was convicted and sentenced to death, Charles refused to grant a pardon, signaling his willingness to sacrifice his closest advisors for his own benefit in the period leading to the outbreak of civil war.

Wesley, John (1703–1791), founder of Wesleyan Methodism. Raised as a high-church Tory, he was dissatisfied with his own spiritual life and used "methodical" rituals and practices to enhance his piety and his emotional relationship with God. Based on his own conversion experience, he was unswerving in his belief that religious experience should be emotional as well as rational. He evangelized all over England for decades, holding tent meetings and preaching in open fields. Wesley managed to keep his Wesleyan fellows within the Anglican Church until he died, but the formation of a separate Methodist sect followed soon after his death.

Wilberforce, William (1759–1833), politician and reformer. Wilberforce experienced an evangelical conversion while on a trip to Europe in 1784 and returned to England to join the growing Evangelical movement. He served as MP from 1780 through 1825, working to pass reforms that generally reflected his religious convictions. He is most well-known for his efforts with Thomas Clarkson to bring an end to the Atlantic slave trade.

Wilkes, John (1725–1797), English radical politician and journalist. Elected MP in 1757 and purchasing the weekly *North Briton* newspaper in 1762, he used his newspaper and the protection from prosecution he enjoyed as MP to call attention to corruption within the king's ministries and to agitate for a variety of political reforms, including the right to publish parliamentary proceedings, freedom of the press, and religious tolerance. He condemned the 1763 Treaty of Paris and supported the American colonists' efforts in the War of Independence. Ejected from Parliament for publishing obscene materials, he regained his seat and eventually also served as Lord Mayor of London (1774). He retired from political life in 1790.

Wilson, James Harold, Baron Wilson of Rievaulx (1916–1995), Labour politician. Wilson entered Parliament in 1945 and eventually served two terms as prime minister (1964–1970, 1974–1976). A moderate Labourite, he did not embrace widespread nationalization of industry but instead focused on more liberal laws over censorship, divorce, immigration, and abortion; he opposed capital punishment and advocated for decriminalization of homosexuality. His time in office saw the outbreak of "The Troubles" with Northern Ireland.

Wollstonecraft, Mary (1759–1797), writer and philosopher. Wollstonecraft, raised by a sickly mother and a spendthrift father, launched her writing career in 1787 with *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* and quickly established herself as a lively voice in the contemporary debates about gender and opportunity. In 1790 she published *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*, a response to Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, following that in 1792 with *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman: With Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects*. She is regarded as one of the forerunners of modern feminism, arguing that women were not naturally inferior to men and should have access to education and opportunity and that limits on women's access to direct power led to the use of manipulative influence instead. She had an illegitimate daughter, Frances Imlay, in 1794. She married philosopher William Godwin in 1797 and gave birth to the couple's daughter, Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin (who would marry the poet Percy Shelley and write the novel *Frankenstein*), in August 1797. She died of septicemia 11 days after giving birth.

Wolsey, Thomas (ca. 1472–1530), cardinal and minister to Henry VIII. Wolsey rose quickly from humble beginnings through the hierarchy of the Catholic Church and became archbishop of York as well

as cardinal, papal legate, and eventually lord chancellor of England. He expanded the court system, endowed new colleges, and involved England in expensive wars with France. He was charged with treason after failing to secure the king a divorce from his first wife, Catherine of Aragon, but died on his way to appear before the court to answer these charges.

Wycliffe, John (ca. 1320s–1384), philosopher and theologian who pressed for reforms that included a reduction in the power of the clergy and translation of the Bible into the language of the people and called into question the legitimacy of the saints and of the papacy. His followers, known as Lollards, are generally regarded as an important precursor to Protestantism.

Wyvill, Christopher (1740–1822), land reformer and cleric. His desire for parliamentary reform led him to form the Yorkshire Association in 1779, a pressure group of landowners like himself calling for the end to a corrupt patronage system, annual parliaments, and reductions in excessive government spending. He was an early supporter of Catholic emancipation and opposed the wars with France.

Bibliographic Essay

Much of the most interesting recent work on Great Britain can be loosely categorized as having to do with the question of identity. That is, what does it mean to be British, to be English, to be Scots or Welsh or Irish or Northern Irish? Further, what does it mean to be a member of a Commonwealth country? This bibliography is by no means complete, but it offers an overview of important work on these questions as they have been shaped over time.

For general histories, the most effective of the textbooks available is the three-volume work by Samantha A. Meigs and Stanford E. Lehmberg, *The Peoples of the British Isles: A New History* (Oxford, 2016). For a briefer textbook, see Hugh F. Kearney, *The British Isles: A History of Four Nations* (Cambridge, 2nd ed., 2012). The massive one-volume work by Norman Davies, *The Isles: A History* (Oxford and New York, 1999) can be idiosyncratic in its approach.

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