

British Isles	France	Spain	Portugal
1603-25 James VI/I	1589-1610 Henry IV	1598-1621 Philip III	1598-1621 Philip II
1625-49 Charles I	1610-43 Louis XIII	1621-65 Philip IV	1621-40 Philip III
1649-60 Interregnum	1643-1715 Louis XIV		1640-56 John IV
1660-85 Charles II		1665-1700 Charles II	1656-67 (1683) Alfonso VI
1685-8 James II			
1688-1702 William and Mary			(1667) 1683- 1706 Peter II
1702-14 Anne		1700-46 Philip V	1706-50 John V
1714-27 George I	1715-74 Louis XV	1746-59 Ferdinand I	
1727-60 George II		1759-88 Charles III	1750-77 Joseph I
1760-1820 George III	1774-92 Louis XVI	1788-1808 Charles IV	1777-1816 Maria I

Fig. 21. Rulers of western Europe, 1600-1789.

The British Isles

In 1603, Queen Elizabeth died after ruling for almost fifty years, and the English throne was inherited by her distant cousin James Stuart (1566-1625), the son of Mary Queen of Scots, who had already been king of Scotland for thirty-five years. James had come to the Scottish throne as an infant, and had been raised by advisors who accepted Calvinist theology and supported the Scottish Presbyterian church structure, in which power was held by elected councils, called presbyteries, rather than by appointed bishops. He gained an excellent education, but also developed a strong sense of the divine right of kings; as we saw above, in a speech to the English Parliament shortly after he assumed the throne, James described himself as their "natural father," responsible only to God. His audience in Parliament, especially the House of Commons, did not agree. During Elizabeth's reign, they had gone beyond discussing and approving

taxes to raising other issues of policy, and they were clearly not willing to accept any lessening in their role.

James inherited Elizabeth's problems, but boasted none of her tactical political skills. Like all early modern monarchs, Elizabeth used patronage very lavishly, rewarding favorites with positions and offices – and often the income that went with them – for their service. Those who hoped for advancement flocked to London and to the court in the same way French aristocrats later would to Versailles. Patronage seekers included some of the great nobles, who held seats in the House of Lords, but also the lower-level nobility – what in England are usually termed “gentry” – and wealthy merchants and professionals, all of whom were represented in the House of Commons. In contrast to France and Spain, English nobles and gentry did not look down on commercial ventures, and they were not tax-exempt. Both gentry and urban merchants gained economically from England's overseas trade, and also invested in new commercial ventures at home, gradually gaining more land and wealth than the high nobility. Members of the House of Commons were better educated as well as wealthier by the seventeenth century, and they were intent on making sure that they had a voice in determining the taxes they were obliged to pay and other matters of public policy.

Some of the gentry and many urban residents, especially in London, were also dissatisfied with the Church of England established by Henry VIII and affirmed by Elizabeth. They thought that the church, with its hierarchical structure of bishops and elaborate ceremonies, was still too close to Roman Catholicism, and they wanted to “purify” it of what they saw as vestiges of Catholicism. These “Puritans,” as they became known, had become increasingly vocal toward the end of Elizabeth's reign, and they expected James, who had been raised in Presbyterian Scotland, to support them. Instead he viewed the hierarchy of bishops as a key support for royal power, stating flatly, “no bishop, no king.”

The war with Spain had left England deeply in debt at James's accession, and the struggle to pay off these debts gave the House of Commons the leverage it needed to expand its powers. The first three decades of the seventeenth century saw a running battle between the Commons and the king. The Commons gradually gained the right to discuss foreign policy as well as taxation, and refused to approve the union of Scotland and England. These disputes continued under James's son, Charles I (ruled 1625–49), and in 1629 Charles dissolved Parliament and resolved to rule on his own. He financed his government by expanding existing taxes in ways that most people considered illegal, such as charging inland areas as well as port cities special “ship money” for defense. His archbishop of Canterbury, William Laud (1573–1645), tried to force all English churches to adopt more elaborate ceremonies and services or risk punishment through a newly established “Court of High Commission.”

Laud's measures were deeply unpopular in many parts of England, but he provoked even greater opposition when he tried to introduce a new prayer book in Scotland, where the church had been Calvinist in theology for more

than seventy-five years. The Scots revolted and invaded England, and in 1640 Charles was forced to call Parliament to pay for an army to fight the Scots. This Parliament, called the "Long Parliament" because it met for thirteen years, was dominated by men with long-standing grievances against the king, and refused to trust him with an army without drastically limiting his power to use that army. It passed an act ruling that the king had to call Parliament at least once every three years, and prohibiting any king from dissolving a Parliament without its approval. It abolished the Court of High Commission and other separate royal courts, and impeached Archbishop Laud. It discussed depriving the bishops of their votes in the House of Lords, and even doing away with the episcopal structure completely. Charles met these demands, as he was faced with both the Scottish invasion and a rebellion in Ireland, in which English Catholics often joined with their Gaelic co-religionists against Protestant Scottish and newer English immigrants. Some members of the House of Commons wanted to go further, however, and give Parliament control over the army, the church, and the appointment of all judges and officials. Charles refused, and also maneuvered to take back some of the measures he had already agreed upon. He began to recruit a separate army from among the nobility and gentry who were loyal to him, and gradually the country split into two camps: the parliamentarians and the royalists, with some moderates in between. England headed toward civil war in what would be the only full-scale revolution in Europe in the seventeenth century.

Looking back at this dramatic period of English history, historians have tried to determine what would make people join one side or the other. The lines were often confusing, but there are some definite trends. Religion was a major factor; in general, Puritans seeking further reformation of the Church of England were parliamentarian, though there were also some Puritans who supported the monarchy. Many people worried that the king planned to return the country to allegiance to Rome. Region also played a role; the south and east of England, including the city of London, tended to support Parliament, while the north and west backed the king. This meant that the more cosmopolitan, richer, and densely populated parts of the country opposed the king. Parliamentarians were also somewhat older; they nostalgically remembered (or imagined) what life had been like under "Good Queen Bess," and thought that the "foreign" Stuarts had broken with these "English" traditions of monarchy. Sometimes the lines reflected local and personal conflicts; as in the Reformation, rivals in various localities took opposing sides, each hoping to gain land or power if the other side lost. Also as in the Reformation - and in later revolutions throughout the world - printed pamphlets whipped up support, with each side portraying the other as foolish or evil. Censorship and other restrictions on publication were not enforced during the chaos of the 1640s, and a wide range of authors took the opportunity to publish political and religious works that might otherwise have been banned.

Those works include many that offered radical plans for change, which were also discussed orally in businesses, houses, and other meeting places. A