

Kings, Bad and Good:
Images of English Kingship and the Glorious Revolution
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[We,] being deeply impressed with the Divine Goodness brightly displayed in the late Revolution, begun and carried on by King William of Glorious Memory, and in bringing in our only Lawful and Rightful Sovereign King George to the peaceable Possession of the Throne of his Royal Ancestors, not withstanding the many open and secret Practices that have been used of late Years to defeat the Succession, cannot sufficiently adore the kind Providence, which has so often and so seasonably interposed to save this Nation from Popery and Slavery. — “A Seasonable Admonition by the Provincial Synod of Lothian and Tweeddale, to the People in their Bounds, with Respect to the Present Rebellion,” *The Flying-Post or the Post-Master*, London, November 1, 1715

The Atlantic Ocean is the central geographical feature that affected Colonial Americans' relationship with their mother country. American historians describe it as both a road that connected the colonies to the homeland, and as a barrier whose dangerous shoals, deadly storms and broad expanses made travel and communication perilous. The Atlantic was also a road over which ideas were carried between the British Isles and the British colonies. Ideas were transmitted by newspapers, letters, and travelers arriving in American ports upon the ships that constantly sailed between the Old World and the New. The news and ideas that traveled across the Atlantic kept colonists in America socially and politically up to date and English while the mother country developed and changed from the end of the Stuart dynasty and the Glorious Revolution to the American Revolution. The ocean was also a barrier to the transmission of information, however, because the ideas, or at least the language that shaped those ideas, often arrived in the New World bereft of the contexts and political nuances that gave them meaning in the mother country. Inevitably, American colonists provided their own contexts when they assimilated new political ideas that arrived from so far away. Frequently they understood these new political ideas not as the products of the politics of the moment in London, but rather in the light of England's history and their own relations with the mother country. In the process, history as they understood it was palpably changed. And sometimes colonists reinterpreted their own history in light of these incompletely understood new ideas that had been generated under other circumstances in another land an ocean away.

Often images that arrived on American shores were tailored by politicians in England in order to mold public opinion and garner public support for themselves or their policies at home. So it was with the images of Prince William of Orange that Americans received in 1689, and when George, the Elector of Hanover, arrived in England to ascend to the throne. So it also was when Whigs dominated government in London after 1715, and began to employ an energetic Whig press to promote their policies. In each of these cases (especially the last), the issues and controversies that lay behind the rhetoric that Americans read in the news from England were downplayed. The underlying issues were, in fact, often unreported in the British press. Supporters of the Crown and government found it prudent to argue that their patrons were preserving the liberties, property and religion of Englishmen against social disorder and conspiracy at home and foreign powers abroad to deflect criticism that they supported foreign invaders (William of Orange and George I), or promoted policies, such as the Septennial Act, the Riot Act, a large standing army, excise taxes, and other measures that

might defy the traditional understandings of the constitution and English liberties. Opposition papers could criticize government, but were forced to do so circuitously, because their editors were constrained by the laws of seditious libel as they applied to the Crown, magistrates and Parliament.¹ After 1716, Whig accusations that Tories were traitors who plotted to restore a Catholic monarch and enslave the people were so successful that the Tory opposition press declined both from decreased popularity and from the threat of prosecution or mob action. What few Tory papers that continued to circulate, like Nathaniel Mist's publications, offered only lukewarm criticism of Whig politicians and the measures they promoted. Tory editors chose instead to criticize the corruption and immorality of their opponents and of the age in general, and to glorify Queen Anne's reign and her government against her detractors. Eventually Tory opposition was subsumed within that safer and more acceptable branch of English political thought that was associated with the English Country political thinkers. So, while both government and the opposition energetically promoted their agendas in the English press, neither did so by debating the issues themselves in detail. They sought instead to influence public opinion by criticizing the honesty and morality of their opponents (generally the only means of criticism available to Tories) and by arguing that it was they who were the true guardians of the constitution and the liberties, property and religion of the nation, while their opponents conspired to reduce the nation to misery and slavery.

Colonists across the ocean received English news and political discourse from a number of sources. They corresponded with friends and relatives in England and conversed with newcomers, but the majority of their information came from the colonial press. Colonial editors garnered information from interviews with mariners and newly arrived immigrants, from correspondence with American travelers in England and Europe, from colonial agents residing in London, and from other colonial newspapers, but the vast majority of their information came directly from English newspapers.² Except during war, news from other colonies amounted to the announcement of ship arrivals or coverage of communications between colonial assemblies and governors. Colonial editors also garnered news stories from England from other colonial newspapers. The vast majority of news that colonial papers carried was about Europe and the British Isles. Historian Paul Langford notes that "in the typical weekly or semiweekly edition" of any colonial newspaper, "the heading 'London,' with its attendant columns and rows of articles, had a way of driving more local information either to an inferior position, or indeed off the page all together."³

By 1700 English newspapers were political organs as much as news vehicles. They were edited by partisans and sponsored by politicians. In 1694 the statute that the government had used to control political content in the press, the Licensing Act, had been allowed to lapse. Publishers gained the opportunity to print a wider range of political news

1 For an enlightening short commentary on the consequences of printing scandalous or seditious libel in a newspaper, see R.M. Wiles, *Freshest Advices: Early Provincial Newspapers in England* (Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 1965), 281-292. For the various means that Hanover government employed to control the English press, see Jeremy Black, *The English Press in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Croom Helm, Ltd., 1987), 135-196. For seditious libel as applied to pamphlets, see Herbert Atherton, *Political Prints in the Age of Hogarth: A Study of the Ideographic Representation of Politics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), 68-74. For Parliament's claim that its actions were immune to criticism in print, and Parliament's response to such material, see Atherton, 74-75, on the ministry and criticism in pamphlets and broadsides, Atherton, 75-83.

2 Charles E. Clark, *The Public Prints: The Newspaper in Anglo-American Culture, 1665-1740* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 88-90.

3 Paul Langford, "British Correspondence in the Colonial Press, 1763-1775: A Study in Anglo-American Misunderstanding Before the American Revolution," in *The Press and the American Revolution*, Bernard Bailyn and John Hench, eds. (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1980), 273.

and views than had been previously possible. Freed of the constraints of the Licensing Act, partisan publishers offered an increasing number of newspapers and pamphlets that promoted party interests and policies and the political careers of their patrons. Partisan periodicals proliferated in the first half of the eighteenth century in spite of various attempts by the government to weed out those that were unfavorable to its measures. Often these attempts were only half-hearted. By the 1720s, Whig ministers and their supporters were well aware of the precarious nature of British politics. The government men of today might well become the opposition of tomorrow. When Queen Anne's Tory government passed a stamp tax to raise the cost of publishing opposition journals, these same Tories had to pay the tax a few years later when they published opposition papers and tracts of their own against the Whig-dominated government of George I. A series of ministers under the Hanovers blasted the opposition press, only to find themselves patronizing opposition publishers of their own when the vagaries of political life cast them out of office. This sort of turnover took place so frequently that even the editors of partisan journals might cynically ask "is there a Patriot now of any Distinction or Eminence, who has not heretofore been a Place-Man? or any Place-Man of Note or Figure that has not been a Patriot?"⁴ All in all, eighteenth-century British politics encouraged a vigorous press devoted to the editorial promotion of party men and party measures.

The great demand for political writers made it possible for the first time for editorialists and publicists to make a comfortable living from their pens. B.W. Hill comments that it "is not always realized by the modern readers of 'Augustan' literature, with its urbane social instruction and tolerant satire, how many of its writers served their apprenticeship in the fierce political infighting" of the early eighteenth century.⁵ Literary figures such as Jonathan Swift, Daniel Defoe, Joseph Addison, and Richard Steele, as well as political hacks like John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon, and lesser known machinators like Tom Brown, George Ridpath and Jean de Fonvive all made a good living practicing the art of the political squib.⁶ By 1714 dozens of political serial publications proliferated in London alone. Some of them, like the *London Gazette* and the *Flying-Post*, were fairly long lived, while others died after a scant few issues. These papers thrived in the political atmosphere of the nation, where ready advertisers and political patrons supported them and growing numbers of literate and politically aware consumers bought them.⁷ Newspaper circulation increased prodigiously during the middle of the eighteenth century. Coffee houses that carried a wide range of papers for their patrons to browse and discuss accounted for some of the increase in circulation. Most of the increase, however, must have been filled by subscribers who chose papers that best reflected their political persuasion, or through the sales by street hawkers who had become a ubiquitous feature of the street life of London and other English cities by

4 *Daily Gazetteer*, August 25, 1737. Unless otherwise mentioned, all English newspapers cited in this chapter were published in London, and may be found in the *Early English Newspapers* series, Research Publications, Inc. All dates are cited as they appear in the sources. If the Julian year is given in the source, but the context is lost without clarification, the Gregorian year is placed in brackets (i.e. January 6, 1688[/89]).

5 B.W. Hill, *The Growth of Parliamentary Parties, 1689-1742* (Hamden, Conn.: The Shoestring Press, 1976), 19.

6 Clark, 41-43.

7 For a discussion of literacy rates in England in the middle of the eighteenth century, see John Brewer, *Party Ideology*, 141-142, and for more extensive studies, see Lawrence Stone, "Literacy and Education in England, 1640-1900," *Past and Present*, 42, 1969; Wyn Ford, "The Problem of Literacy in Early Modern England," *History*, 78 (February, 1993), 22-37; David Vincent, *Literacy and Popular Culture: England, 1750-1914* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

mid-century.⁸ By 1740, seventeen London papers filled the demands of their customers, printing one copy of a newspaper each week for every four inhabitants of Great Britain.⁹

Much of the content of early eighteenth-century newspapers was political, and it reached a wide reading public. It was not the Englishman's only source of political information and commentary, however; sermons, tracts and pamphlets, plays, songs, broadsides, pageantry, and even riots all served political purposes. Nevertheless, newspapers and pamphlets are among the most important to this study because of their portability. They were easily transported to the colonies where they were eagerly awaited, read and reprinted in colonial papers.

Because Americans received and were influenced by so many ideas about the English constitution, politics and kingship developed in the mother country, it is necessary to trace the development of these ideas at their source. While the press was employed with varying degrees of success by English monarchs from at least the reign of Elizabeth, and by politicians and Parliament from the 1620s, the public relations campaigns that had the most profound influence on Americans of the decades before the American Revolution were those sponsored by William of Orange in his bid for the English throne of 1688/9, and by the Whig supporters of the Hanover succession and dynasty who dominated government from 1714 through the eighteenth century.

For Englishmen everywhere, the Glorious Revolution was the event that defined eighteenth-century political culture and thought. In the political perceptions of English Whig thinkers this event marked a period of national unity when, according to the legend of William's invitation, arrival and accession, distinctions of politics and differences among English Protestants were put aside and an "entire concord among all intelligent Englishmen" was attained against the Catholic and tyrannical James II in favor of the Prince of Orange.¹⁰ The Revolution was also viewed as the event that restored the English constitution to its ancient roots: government by consent, frequent Parliaments, and a balanced constitution that preserved the liberties and property of English subjects. At the same time William was seen

⁸ Clark, 6-7.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 259.

¹⁰ Lord Macaulay, *The History of England*, edited and abridged by Hugh Trevor-Roper (New York: Penguin Books, 1968), 279.

as a defender of Protestantism and as the deliverer of England from the evils of Catholicism.¹¹

William himself worked hard to help create these perceptions. He realized that he faced problems in making his case before the English people on the one hand, and the European states on the other, if he invaded England with a foreign army. If he entered England only as a champion of the Protestant cause, he must alienate his Catholic allies on the Continent. At the same time, if he did not make a strong enough case against James II, one that included and, in traditional English fashion, related James' political transgressions with his religious ones, William might well find himself treated as a foreign invader rather than as the nation's deliverer. To smooth the path, William and his closest Dutch and English advisors created a pamphlet to make their case against James and to clarify the Prince of Orange's intentions toward England. The *Declaration of His Highness William Henry, Prince of Orange, of the Reasons Inducing Him to Appear in Arms in the Kingdom of England for Preserving of the Protestant Religion and for Restoring the Lawes and Liberties of England, Scotland, and Ireland*, and its sequel, *The Second Declaration*, were devised to sway English public opinion toward the Prince while making a strong argument against James' administration. William, avoiding any specific direct attack upon the King himself, declared that James had been led astray by Jesuits and wicked advisers to violate the fundamental laws of the kingdom, endangering the liberties and property of the people and subverting the constitution. The Declaration alleged that James had illegally favored Roman Catholics over his Protestant subjects, and had persecuted Protestants for their faith and for their love of liberty. William also cast aspersions on the origins and legitimacy of the infant

¹¹ The ideological processes that led to this understanding of the Revolution are among the topics of discussion in this chapter. For a more complete analysis of the development of the English Whig interpretation of the Revolution during the reign of William and Mary, see Lois Schwoerer, ed., *The Revolution of 1688-1689: Changing Perspectives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992). She also offers an excellent historiographical study of the Revolution in the introduction. The historian who did the most to fix the Whig understanding of the Glorious Revolution in the minds of his antecedents was Lord Macaulay. Whig historians from G.M. Trevelyan to William Speck have argued more subtly that James aspired toward absolutism, and that William therefore delivered the British nation from a Continental style Absolutist regime. Revisionist views of the Revolution may be found in the works of J.P. Kenyon, H.T. Dickinson, J.R. Jones, and John Brewer, among others. Revisionists generally argue that the results of the Revolution achieved little change in government, representing a political compromise between Tories and Whigs to preserve the political status quo while removing James II from the political scene. Brewer makes the case that it was not the Revolution that changed the constitution, but the necessities of war and finance during the reigns of William and Mary, and Anne. See W.A. Speck, *Reluctant Revolutionaries: Englishmen and the Revolution of 1688* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988); J.P. Kenyon, *Revolution Principles: The Politics of Party, 1689-1720* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977); Dickinson, *Liberty and Property*; J.R. Jones, *The Revolution of 1688 in England* (New York: Norton, 1973); Brewer, *Sinews of Power*.

Since the 1960s several historians, of whom the most notable is Lois Schwoerer, called, for lack of a better term, "Neo-Whigs," offered a rebuttal to the revisionist analysis of the Revolution. "Neo-Whigs" argue that while James' acts were less unconstitutional than earlier Whigs contended, the Revolution nevertheless wrought changes upon the English constitution that were fundamental and far-reaching, and that the Revolutionary settlement, as dictated by the Bill of Rights, went a long way toward redefining the "ancient constitution," and placed new constraints upon the Crown. For Neo-Whigs like Schwoerer and Corinne Weston, the settlement brought about a new, if not very radical, conception of kingship. See Lois Schwoerer, *The Declaration of Rights, 1689* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981); Corinne Weston, *English Constitutional Theory and the House of Lords, 1556-1832* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965).

Other scholars, among them Mark Goldie and Marie McMahon, argue that radical ideas in the press and the Convention promoted by a small minority had an effect on the outcome of the constitutional settlement, creating the notion of kingship constrained by Parliament, thus permanently transferring the lion's share of the power of government from the executive to the Commons. See Marie P. McMahon, *The Radical Whigs, John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon: Libertarian Loyalists to the House of Hanover* (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1990); Mark Goldie, "Obligations, Utopias, and their Historical Context," *The Historical Journal*, 26 (September, 1983), 727-746.

Prince of Wales, declaring that “evil councillors” had published “that the Queen hath brought forth a son,” that “not only we ourselves but all the good subjects of the Kingdom do vehemently suspect . . . was not bourn by the Queen.”¹² William declared that it was his intention to bring these, the grievances of the people of England, before a freely chosen Parliament for investigation and settlement.

William claimed that he did not come as a foreign invader, but because of his own, and his wife’s interest in the succession, the affection that English subjects had shown in the past to himself and to his family, and at the express invitation of a “great many Lords, both Spiritual and Temporal, and by many Gentlemen, and other Subjects of all Ranks.”¹³ He claimed that he was not actually invading England, but was accompanied by a small army (and, significantly, though he did not mention it, a printing press) in order to defend his person from James’ wicked councillors.

From Torbay to London, William’s press worked harder than his army did, printing two weekly papers and a vast array of pamphlets supporting the Prince and attacking James. Many of these pamphlets were designed, not so much to castigate James, as to illuminate the character and appearance of the Prince of Orange. William, who was asthmatic, frail and weak, and whose appearance could only be described as homely out of a charitable act of kindness, was portrayed by his supporters as healthy, robust and handsome. Pamphlets and tracts published by William and his allies praised the Dutch Prince’s morality and integrity, his justice and virtue, and paraded his Protestant piety at every opportunity. Though he was irritable, distant, cold and aloof, William’s allies depicted him in their myriad tracts on his character as amiable, sweetly tempered, and even charming. The Prince was declared valorous and brave on the battlefield, and unambitious, courteous, and unassuming in his dealings with others.¹⁴ In short, the Orangist press endowed its patron with the traits of the ideal prince, comely in his physical, social and spiritual attributes, manly in battle, exemplary in his piety, and mild and solicitous toward his subjects. William’s character, as illustrated in his propaganda, went a long way toward creating the mold for the model English Protestant king. At the same time, the characterization of James in William’s Declaration and in the flood of pamphlets, tracts and cartoons produced by the Prince and his English and Dutch supporters employed traditional anti-Stuart motifs from the English Civil War, the Popish Plot and the Succession Crisis, to portray James as an evil Popish tyrant, duped by

12 *Declaration of Reasons* . . . Cited in Lois G. Schworer, “Propaganda in the Revolution of 1688-89,” *American Historical Review*, Vol. 82, No. 4, October 1977, 855. On the propaganda of the counterfeit birth of the Prince of Wales, see Rachel J. Weil, “The Politics of Legitimacy: Women and the Warming-Pan Scandal,” in *The Revolution of 1688-1689: Changing Perspectives*, 65-82.

13 *Ibid.*, 853.

14 *Character of His Royal Highness William Henry Prince of Orange* (London, 1689), 7. For a few other works that characterize William in heroic terms, both during and after the Revolution., see Francis Carswell, *England’s Restoration Parallel’d in Judah’s: or, The Primitive Judge and Counsellor. In a Sermon Before the Honourable Judge at Abingdon Assizes, for the County of Berks. Aug. 6, 1689* (London: 1689), 30-32; Henry Parker, *The True Portraiture of the Kings of England* (London, 1688); [anon,] *The Abdicated Prince: or, The Adventures of Four Years. A Tragi-Comedy, as It Was Lately Acted at the Court of Alba Regalis, by Several Persons of Great Quality* . . . (London: 1690); “Poems on the Reign of William III (1690, 1696, 1699, 1702),” *The Augustan Reprint Society No. 166* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1974); [John Whittell,] *A Short Review of the Remarkable Providences; Attending Our Gracious Sovereign William the IIIrd* . . . (London, 1699); Edmund Waller, *Poems &c. Written Upon Several Occasions, and to Several Persons*. 6th ed. (London: H. Herrington & Thomas Bennes, 1693), 4, 16, 17; Thomas Hughes, *The Court of Neptune: A Poem Address’d to the Right Honourable Charles Montague, Esq.* (London: 1700); Gilbert Burnet, *An Abridgement of Bishop Burnet’s history of His Own Times* (London, 1724), 402; John Banks, *The History of the Life and Reign of William III, King of England, Prince of Orange, and Hereditary Stadtholder of the United Provinces* . . . (London, 1744); [anon,] *A Short Review of the Remarkable Providences Attending Our Gracious Sovereign William the IIIrd Continued from the Year 1693, Down to This Day*. (London, 1799).

coreligionists and wicked power-hungry advisors.¹⁵ This propaganda effort did much to consolidate an array of previous sketches of bad rulers into one ideal, and thus helped to create a stereotype of the evil English monarch.¹⁶ At the same time William also set a precedent when he declared that he would rest his case and the case of England in the hands of a Parliament. In doing so he confirmed the nascent Whig assumption that Parliaments chose kings rather than vice versa, and that good English rulers were willing to subordinate their prerogatives to parliamentary constraint.

Once he arrived in London in late December 1688, the Prince called the Lords Temporal and Spiritual together and summoned the membership of Charles II's last Parliament (excluding members of James II's first and only Parliament as an illegal body). This assembly advised William to create a provisional government, and to call a convention in order to create a new government. The first task of this new Parliament was to bring some degree of legitimacy to the coup that had unseated the legitimate and constitutional hereditary monarch. The second was to replace James with a new ruler. Although William still maintained that he had no desire to rule, and that his only objective in invading England was to resolve the grievances of the English people, only the most naive observer could believe that William did not want the throne. In fact, he had already begun to exercise royal authority in both foreign and domestic affairs of state. He expelled the French ambassador in early January, a provocation that was in effect an act of war. He also had the Lord Chancellor (the notorious Judge Jeffries) arrested and incarcerated in the Tower and dismissed all of James' high court judges, replacing them with others of his own choosing. As J.P. Kenyon notes, "He was not acting in James' behalf, and lawyers acknowledged that the King's legal authority had lapsed from the moment he left the country."¹⁷ In short, William had already begun to exercise a de facto regal power, even before the Convention was seated.

The Convention Parliament met in late January of 1689. From the start it was plagued with constitutional complications. First, there were questions concerning William's place in

15 For a few examples of works that employ specific themes (Papism, arbitrary rule, sexual impotence and sterility, cowardice, evil advisors, and, of course, the introduction of a counterfeit Prince of Wales) to vilify James, see *The Amours of Messalina. Late Queen of Albion . . .*, by *A Woman of Quality*, 4 vols. (London: John Lyford, 1689); [Anon.,] *A Rara Show, A Rara Shight! A Strange Monster (The Likes Not in Europe)* . . . (London: R. Janeway, 1689); [Anon.,] *The Confession of Mrs. Judith Wilks the Queen's Midwife, With a Full Account of Her Running Away by Night; and Going into France I* (London[?], 1689); [Anon.,] *A Suppliment to the Muses Farewell to Popery and Slavery, Or a Collection of Miscellany Poems, Satyrs, Songs, &c, Made by the Most Eminent Wits of the Nation, as the Shams, Intreagues, and Plots of Priests and Jesuits Gave Occasion*. (London, 1690); J. Fraser, *A Friendly Letter to Father Petre, Concerning His Part in the Late King's Government: Published for His Defence and Justification* (London, 1690); [Anon.,] *The Pagan Prince: Or a Comical History of the Heroick Achievements of the Palatine of Eboracum. By the Author of the Secret History of King Charles II and King James II* (Amsterdam, 1690); John Shute, Viscount Barrington, *A Dissuasive from Jacobitism: Shewing in General What the Nation is to Expect form a Popish King; and in Particular, from the Pretender . . .* (London, 1713), (went through three editions in 1713-1714); Gilbert Burnet, *An Abridgement of Bishop Burnet's History of His Own Times*, 326-397, 416-424; [Anon.,] *A Brief Account of the Moral and Political Acts of the Kings and Queens of England* (London, 1793), 240-249.

16 The best discussion of the propaganda of the Glorious Revolution (and stereotyping of both William and James II) is Lois Schwoerer, "Propaganda in the Revolution of 1688-89." For some examples of the vilification of James in satirists' cartoons see plates on pages 863-867, and explanatory text. See also Stephen B. Baxter, "William III as Hercules: The Political Implications of Court Culture;" Steven N. Zwicker, "Representing the Revolution: Politics and High Culture in 1689;" and Lois Potter, "Politics and Popular Culture: The Theatrical Response to the Revolution," all in *The Revolution of 1688-1689: Changing Perspectives*, Lois Schwoerer, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992). For an older, and less comprehensive view, but one that indicates the *international* flavor of William's propaganda and characterizations, see M. Dorothy George, *English Political Caricature to 1792: A Study of Opinion and Propaganda*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), 1:62-64. George's long study also stresses the permanence of the stereotypical motifs in English political literature and art.

17 J.P. Kenyon, *Stuart England*. 2nd ed. (London: Penguin Books, Ltd., 1990), 272.

things. Most members of the Convention agreed that James had forfeited his right to rule by his unconstitutional behavior while on the throne, if not by fleeing his kingdom. The Convention had no desire for his return. On the other hand, there was scant constitutional precedent that might legitimize William's accession apart from declaring him a conqueror, an act that was unacceptable to most members. To declare William of Orange a conqueror was to surrender the nation to a foreign power. This would hardly sit well with the English populace. Additionally, according to prevailing political philosophers, a foreign conqueror was by definition a despot. For Thomas Hobbes, for instance, "Dominion acquired by Conquest, or Victory in war, is that which some Writers call Despotically, . . . and this Dominion is then acquired to the Victor, when the Vanquished, to avoid the present stroke of death, covenanteth either in express words, or by other sufficient signs . . . that so long as his life, and liberty of his body is allowed him, the Victor shall have the use thereof." In short, Hobbes continued, the vanquished are the slaves of the victor.¹⁸ It would not do to trade one sort of slavery for another.

A minority within the Convention called for an outright disposition in favor of William by the simple expedient of declaring the throne empty and installing the Prince on it. There were similar, if not identical, precedents for such a disposition, one being the accession of Henry Tudor (Henry VII) in 1485. Henry had employed an army to supplement a tenuous claim to the throne based on family affinity. As the nephew and son-in-law of James II, William had, his supporters argued, as strong a claim as Henry in both particulars. The comparison was, however, strained by facts. There had been no Bosworth field; James still lived over the water; and the existence of a legitimate heir to the throne, the infant James, Prince of Wales, further strained the analogy.¹⁹ Additionally, the prevailing Whig understanding of the first Tudor ruler made the idea unpalatable. Henry was popularly believed to have been a despotic and arbitrary ruler who raised extortionate and unconstitutional taxes, created the Court of Star Chamber to punish political enemies and enforce his tax schemes, and was allegedly manipulated by grasping and cruel councilors.²⁰ These were hardly the qualities that William's supporters wanted to attribute to the Prince by association.

The Orange Prince's constitutional status was not the only problem. The Convention's existence and purpose were also open to debate. It was not properly a Parliament, since a reigning monarch did not call it. In fact it was called by an extra-constitutional body and created when the throne of England was vacant. The traditional paraphernalia required to call

18 Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*. C.B. MacPherson, ed. (London: Penguin Books, 1985), 255. Significantly, John Locke agreed with Hobbes, writing that the victor in a just war "has an absolute power over the lives of those, who, by putting themselves in a state of war, have forfeited them." Locke argued that the despot had no right to their possessions, however. An interesting caveat. Locke apparently believed that the despot could kill his subjects with relative impunity, but could not take their property. See John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, by John Locke. With a Supplement *Patriarchia* by Robert Filmer, Thomas I. Cook, ed. (New York: Hafner Press, 1947), 180. The question of whether or not William ruled by right of conquest while the legitimate King "languished" in exile at St. Germain became a subject for contention between Jacobites and Williamites even after William's accession. Thomas Comber argued against the accusation of usurpation by Jacobites, that James' flight was a voluntary act, and thus, William filled the vacuum left by James' voluntary abdication. Comber assured his readers, however, that William did so only at the request, and with the full submission, of the people of England (Comber, *The Protestant Mask Taken off*. . . , 7-8, 25).

19 Lucile Pinkham, *William III and the Respectable Revolution: The Part Played by William of Orange in the Revolution of 1688* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1954), 202-203.

20 See Henry Parker, *The True Portrait of the Kings of England* (London, 1688), 35-38. Also *The British Mercury*, June 23, 1714, 1; "Those of the British Kings Who Aimed at Despotic Power, or the Oppression of the Subject," *New York Weekly Journal*, January 17, 1737/8; [Anon.,] *A Brief Account of the Moral and Political Acts of the Kings and Queens of England* (London, 1793), 132-139

a Parliament were even absent because James, in a last act of political sabotage, had countermanded the writs to select a new Parliament and thrown the Great Seal into the Thames on his way out of the city. Not only might the constitutionality of the Convention be questioned, but also its purpose. At one extreme, some conservatives wanted to avoid acknowledging William as king at all, and establish a regency instead.²¹ Other conservatives argued that the purpose of the Convention Parliament was to establish William on the throne as quickly as possible, to preserve the Anglican Church against both Roman Catholicism and English Dissenters, and in order to punish James' accomplices and supporters as quickly and decisively as possible. At the other extreme, a few supporters of the Revolution who were present at the Convention asserted that the nation had been thrown into a state of nature at James' abdication, and the Convention represented a new constituent assembly with a mandate to alter the English constitution in any way that it saw fit. These members desired that England be transformed from a monarchy to a republic.²² Some members proposed a regency. Others called for Mary, the daughter of James, to succeed her father rather than her husband.²³ A very small minority, primarily of Lords, argued that King James, while he lived, could not be deposed, and that the proceedings of the Convention amounted to "accumulative treason."²⁴

When the Convention met on 22 January, 1689, it chose a speaker and promptly moved on to consider the state of the nation, and what might be done to solve the problems at hand. The result of their deliberations was the Declaration of Rights. The majority of those seated agreed with William's *Declaration of Reasons* when they opened debates with the premise that James had "endeavored to subvert the constitution of the Kingdom . . . by the advice of Jesuits and other wicked persons."²⁵ After much discussion over wording, members reached a consensus resolution stating that James had, on the advice of evil councilors, violated the fundamental laws of the land, and had deserted his kingdom, and hence was no longer king. After settling this question, the committee moved on to find a successor. The committee quickly eliminated the infant Prince of Wales from the succession by excluding any Catholic monarch from ever again sitting upon the throne of England. On 24 January, Commons passed a resolution that "it hath been found, by experience, to be inconsistent with the safety and welfare of this Protestant kingdom to be governed by a Popish Prince."²⁶ Thus, the Commons, by declaring the throne vacant and the immediate heir incapacitated by virtue of his religion, left the field open for William. A resolution to offer the throne to him had been proposed and seconded in Commons on 29 January, when Anthony Cary, Lord Falkland, a Tory lawyer, intervened. He questioned the wisdom of filling the throne without defining the powers of the executive. "It concerns us to take such care," he said, "that as the Prince of

21 The idea of a regency was promoted primarily by supporters of James II as a means of avoiding a deposition, and keeping the Stuart claim alive. See Speck, 99. See also Howard Nenner, *The Right to be King: The Succession of the Crown of England, 1603-1714* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 161, 163; Henry Horwitz, "Parliament and the Glorious Revolution," *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 47 (1974), 44; Eveline Cruickshanks, et. al, "Division in the House of Lords on the Transfer of the Crown and Other Issues, 1689-1694: Ten New Lists," *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 53 (1980), 59.

22 Kenyon, *Stuart England*, 271-2; Maurice Ashley, *The Glorious Revolution of 1688* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1966), 179.

23 See Nenner, 163; Ashley, 179; Speck, 102.

24 Speck, 99-100.

25 J. Jones to A. Charlett, 21 January, 1689. Cited in Speck, 95.

26 Speck, 103.

Orange has secured us from Popery, we may secure ourselves from Arbitrary Government.” Falkland argued that before the throne should pass to any new monarch, the Convention should “consider what powers we ought to give to the Crown, to satisfy them that sent us hither.”²⁷

Falkland’s recommendation found support from the vast majority of members. Whigs supported it as a means of explaining James’ abdication in order to forestall public disorder and to punish their political enemies who had supported the Stuart monarch. They saw that both goals might best be reached if “the nation’s grievances” were published in detail.²⁸ Tory members were just as eager as their Whig colleagues to resolve the matter. Discussion of the possibility of placing constraints on the king had been circulating among the Tory leadership since the previous October. They regarded the exercise of some restraint on the powers of the monarch as a necessity both to preserve the Anglican Church and to prevent arbitrary rule and taxation without parliamentary oversight. William had also tacitly endorsed Parliamentary oversight of the monarch when, in his Declaration and in other tracts published by his supporters, he advocated that a parliament be called to judge the nation’s grievances, and restore the liberties and rights of the kingdom, and the “ancient constitution.”²⁹ Some Tories, like their Whig colleagues, also wanted to see James’ followers punished.

The result of Falkland’s proposal was the Declaration of Grievances, which was renamed the Declaration of Rights. The Declaration of Rights presented a list of actions, attributed to James II, that came to define arbitrary rule. The document also confirmed the supremacy of Parliament. Its creators claimed that it represented no constitutional innovations; it merely reaffirmed the undisputable ancient rights of English subjects, and at the same time reiterated the ancient first principles of the constitution by giving Parliament pride of place in government.

The Declaration began with a list of allegations against James II. It claimed that the Stuart ruler, “by the Assistance of divers Evil Councillors, Judges, and Ministers, employed by him did endeavour to subvert and extirpate the Protestant Religion, and the Lawes and Liberties of this Kingdom.”³⁰ He had pretended the right to dispense with laws, to set up unconstitutional courts, and to prosecute defendants in his own courts who, by right, should have been tried only by Parliament. James levied taxes without consent, and raised and maintained a standing army in time of peace without consulting Parliament. He allowed Catholics to go armed and disarmed Protestants. He inflicted cruel and unusual punishments, “all which were contrary to the known Lawes and Statutes and Freedome of this Realm.”³¹

Having summed up James’ perfidy, the document declared that William, “whom it hath pleased Almighty God to make the glorious Instrument of delivering this Kingdom from Popery and Arbitrary Power,” had come by the invitation of Englishmen of all classes to

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 105.

²⁸ Schwoerer, *The Declaration of Rights*, 190-191.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 184-185.

³⁰ *The Declaration of Rights*, printed in Schwoerer, *The Declaration of Rights*, 295.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 295-6.

resolve the nation's grievances.³² In response to this call the Convention proposed thirteen items as the best means to resolve their grievances and "for the vindication and asserting of their [the people of England] antient rights and Liberties."³³ They declared it illegal for the Crown to dispense with or suspend laws, to raise money without the consent of Parliament, to create courts of special jurisdiction, or to raise or keep standing armies in times of peace without the consent of Parliament. They confirmed the right of Protestant subjects to keep arms "for their defence Suitable to their Condition and as allowed by Law," and the right of English subjects to petition the king.³⁴ It also called for frequent Parliaments, and declared that freedom of speech and debate within that body ought not to be hindered by the Crown or the courts. The document then declared William and Mary to be the co-rulers of the realm.

Like William's *Declaration of Reasons* before it, the Declaration of Rights rehearsed and clarified, indeed codified, the behavior of arbitrary rulers, and by contrast, good rulers as well. It redefined the relationship between king and people and also elevated William to defender and savior of English Protestantism and liberty. As is so often the case in English constitution making, the framers of the Declaration of Rights who were, at the time, most concerned with the specific problems at hand (reversing James' abuses, increasing parliamentary oversight over the executive and filling a vacant throne) created two political myths. The first was that the Convention had restored the ancient constitution, thus preserving the ancient rights and liberties and the "primitive Christianity" of the English people. The second was that the Declaration confirmed and sharpened the dichotomy between good and evil monarchs, as represented by James Stuart and William of Orange. The Convention also created new political realities: that henceforth the behavior of the Crown was to be constrained by Parliament, and that the succession of English monarchs was not entirely hereditary, but might be changed by the people through their representative body.³⁵

Although the Crown as redefined by the Declaration of Right was subordinated to Parliament, it was still intended to be able to exercise the constitutional powers necessary in order to function as an institution of government. This was necessary because political

32 *Ibid.*, 296. Both the Convention and William took advantage of the long tradition of anti-Romanism in England. For a few relevant works that explore the English political and literary tradition, see Ethan Howard Shagan, "Constructing Discord: Ideology, Propaganda, and the English Responses to the Irish Rebellion of 1641," *Journal of British Studies*, 36 (January, 1997), 4-34; Alexandra Walsham, "'The Fatall Vesper': Providentialism and Anti-Popery in Late Jacobean London," *Past and Present*, 144 (August, 1994), 36-84; Peter Lake, "Deeds Against Nature: Cheap Print, Protestantism and Murder in Early Seventeenth-Century England," in *Culture and Politics in Early Stuart England*, Kevin Sharpe and Peter Lake, eds. (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1993), 283, *passim*; James Morgan Reed, "Atrocity Propaganda and the Irish Rebellion," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 2 (April, 1938), 229-244; Caroline Hibbard, *Charles I and the Popish Plot* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983); J.P. Kenyon, *The Popish Plot* (London: Heinemann, 1972).

33 *Ibid.*, 296.

34 *Ibid.*, 296.

35 See [Sir James Tyrell,] *A Brief Enquiry into the Ancient Constitution and Government of England, as Well in Respect to the Administration, as Succession thereof. Set Forth in a Dialogue, and Fitted for Men of Ordinary Learning and Capacities. By a True Lover of His Country.* (London, 1695), 11, 29-31, *passim*; [Anon.,] *A Short Account Touching the Succession of the Crown* (London[?], 1689[?]); [Anon.,] *A Letter Writ by a Clergy-Man to his Neighbour. Concerning the Present Circumstances of the Kingdom, and the Allegiance that is Due to the King and Queen* (London, 1689), 8-9; Comber, *The Protestant Mask Taken Off*, 25. Both Schwoerer and Speck studied the extent to which the charges against James were constitutionally fair, and concluded that, in the words of the former, "not all the grievances were violations of known law, and not all of the rights were 'ancient' and 'undoubted,'" and that the *Declaration of Rights* was "intrinsically, a document that embodies the principles of Whigs who wanted to change the kingship as well as the king." See Schwoerer, *Declaration of Rights*, 100-101, and Speck, 152-163.

thinkers understood that the English government was built on a republican model, in which the three branches (Crown, Lords and Commons) employed checks and balances to protect the people's liberties. The king still had the power of appointments—"of disposing of all Places of Honour, Profit, and Trust"—to positions of church and state, and the judiciary and the military.³⁶ He still had the power to create peers, and, so long as he did so frequently, to summon and dismiss Parliament. He still had a negative over Parliamentary statute, though he was forbidden from giving specific dispensations or from suspending laws once they were on the books. In short, William was not to be a titular head of state, but "a real, working, governing king."³⁷

The myth making continued in the coronation ceremony of 11 April, 1689. Instead of employing the Archbishop of Canterbury, William Sancroft, who did not support the new regime, William and his advisors gave the responsibility for arranging the ceremony to Henry Compton, Bishop of London. Compton, one of the signers of the Invitation and Mary's former tutor, had a reputation for militant anti-Catholicism and was respected among Dissenters and Whigs as well as those moderate High Church Tories who supported William. The Anglican Communion ceremony, absent from James' coronation, was reinstated, and its importance stressed by placing the coronation ceremony in the middle of the Eucharist. A large (quarto-sized) and richly adorned Protestant Bible was featured prominently among the regalia. It was presented to the royal couple during the ceremony at Westminster Hall that preceded the coronation, and was carried in the procession to the Abbey and shown from time to time to the spectators along the way.³⁸ The couple kissed the Bible after placing their hands upon it during the oath, copying the practice of witnesses when they took the oath in the law courts. Compton then admonished the royal couple to make the Bible "the rule of [their] whole life and Government."³⁹ The prominence of the Protestant Bible in the coronation ceremony confirmed the religious character of the Revolution, and reminded spectators that the new king was the rescuer and defender of English Protestantism. The text of the coronation sermon preached by Dr. Gilbert Burnet, an English refugee of conscience who had returned from Holland with William, was "The God of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God." This passage from the Book of Samuel was significant as it was God's exhortation to David after He had shown His favor by placing him on the throne of Israel in preference to the children and line of Saul, whom God had punished with death for their transgressions. Hence, to biblically conscious Englishmen, the sermon both admonished the new monarchs to rule in a godly fashion and equated William's coronation with the act of divine providence that had placed David on the throne of Israel.

Another important feature of the ceremony was the introduction of a modified coronation oath. The new oath required the king not only to follow and uphold the laws and customs of the realm, as had traditionally been the case, but it also demanded that the rulers govern the nation "according to the statutes in Parliament agreed on, and the laws and customs" of England, significantly placing parliamentary statute in the oath for the first time

36 "A Defence of the CONSTITUTION, against some Late Doctrines, and one Late Attempt," *London Journal*, February 9, 1734.

37 F.W. Maitland, *Constitutional History of England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), 388.

38 Lois G. Schwoerer, "The Coronation of William and Mary, April 11, 1689," in *The Revolution of 1688-1689: Changing Perspectives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) 114-115.

39 *Ibid.*, 115.

and giving it a place of precedence before the other elements of the Common Law.⁴⁰ The new oath clearly implied that monarchs were not above Parliament, and that statute took precedence over the traditions and customs of the nation.⁴¹

The symbolism that equated William with English Protestant kingship appeared in the memorabilia of the coronation as well as in the regalia. A medal struck for the occasion featured the two monarchs surrounded by a floral wreath of oranges and roses. A single crown was placed above their heads, and above the crown were the eye and sun rays that symbolized divine providence. Below the couple was an open book captioned “LEGES ANGLIAE,” and resting upon the open book was a liberty cap. The new monarchs were thus portrayed as providential liberators of the English people, whose rule was the rule of law.

William’s propaganda machine did not rest after the coronation. The king’s supporters published articles, pamphlets, plays and songs during his reign that were intended to keep a proper understanding of the Revolution fresh in the minds of his subjects.⁴² These works continued to stress anti-Stuart and anti-Catholic themes, and the idea that the nation had been unified under William. Over time the incidents and rumors of James’ reign became stock props for the popular press, and crafty priests, Catholic worship, evil advisers, bed warming pans, French agents provocateurs, violent, half-witted and belligerent Irishmen, and royal cowardice became the potent symbols of tyrannical rule.⁴³ At the same time authors and poets praised their patron in increasingly flowery terms. The themes of the model ruler and some of the props of the model tyrant are evidenced in this “clearly unperformable” stage instruction from the closing of the last scene from *The Abdicated Prince* of 1690:

Enter Prince Lysander, attended with the Nobility and Gentry of Hungary, and Guards in a magnificent manner, with Drums beating, Trumpets sounding, Colours flying, the People shouting, and the Guns round the great Tower firing; at which the Skies clear up, the Sun shines, and all the enchanted Pagan Mosques, Priests, Jebusites, Crosses, Beads, Quo Warranto’s, Dispensators, Ecclesiastic Commissioners, &c., vanish in a Moment.⁴⁴

40 Schwoerer, “The Coronation of William and Mary, April 11, 1689,” 123.

41 Speck, *Reluctant Revolutionaries*, 164-5.

42 Steven N. Zwicker, “Representing the Revolution: Politics and High Culture in 1689,” in *The Revolution of 1688-1689: Changing Perspectives*, 165-183.

43 For a discussion of the stereotypes in plays, poetry and ballads, see Lois Potter, “Politics and Popular Culture: The Theatrical response to the Revolution,” in *The Revolution of 1688-1689: Changing Perspectives*, 184-197.

44 *The Abdicated Prince: or the Adventures of Four Years. A Tragi-Comedy, As It was Acted at the Court of ALBA REGALIS, by Several Persons of Great Quality* (London, 1690), 60. Cited in Potter, “Politics and Popular Culture,” 190.