CHAPTER 24

Absolutism and Enlightenment in Europe, 1600–1763

- The Age of Absolutism
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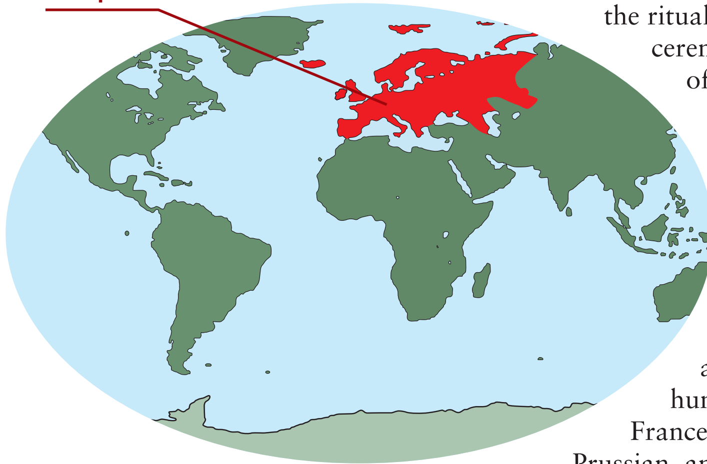
The Hall Of Mirrors, Palace Of Versailles

The Hall of Mirrors in Louis XIV's magnificent palace at Versailles (page 582). This photo captures the wealth and power of the man who became Europe's most famous practitioner of royal absolutism.

As the first rays of the morning sun reflected off dozens of rectangular mirrors lining the long ceremonial hallway at the palace of Versailles, France's King Louis XIV was already awake. In the royal bedroom, as he dressed, he was attended by a dozen people, some of whom were his trusted servants. Others, however, were among the most distinguished nobles of France. The duke of Rohan tied the king's shoes, the count of Nevers handed Louis a freshly powdered wig, while the prince of Condé helped His Majesty into a richly brocaded jacket. Then Louis XIV, outfitted for the morning's affairs, led his distinguished retinue into a large meeting room adjacent to the Hall of Mirrors (see page 581).



It was an ordinary day in the summer of 1685. Though the ritual of dressing might suggest that a momentous ceremony was about to take place, it was only one of many rituals performed each day as the king went about his daily business of rising, eating, working, playing, and sleeping. Ostentatious and elaborate, the ceremonies were intended to underscore the king's dominance over his nobility as well as his grandeur. They were an integral component of **royal absolutism**, a system of governance in which the ruler's authority is said to come directly from God and thus cannot be limited or challenged by any human institution. Developed most extensively in France, this system was also the model for Austrian, Prussian, and Russian rule in seventeenth-century Europe.

Even as Louis reigned supreme, however, the foundations of absolutism were under challenge. As scientists overturned long-held beliefs about the physical universe, other thinkers began to question prevailing ideas of governance, social justice, economics, and gender roles. The result was an intellectual revolution, based on the assertions that authority and belief must be challenged by reason, that society must be structured by logic rather than by tradition and religion, and that governing authority comes not from God but from the people being governed. Initiated in Europe by a small, educated elite, this revolution opened the way for global advances in science and technology and for people the world over to participate more fully in their society's political and economic life.

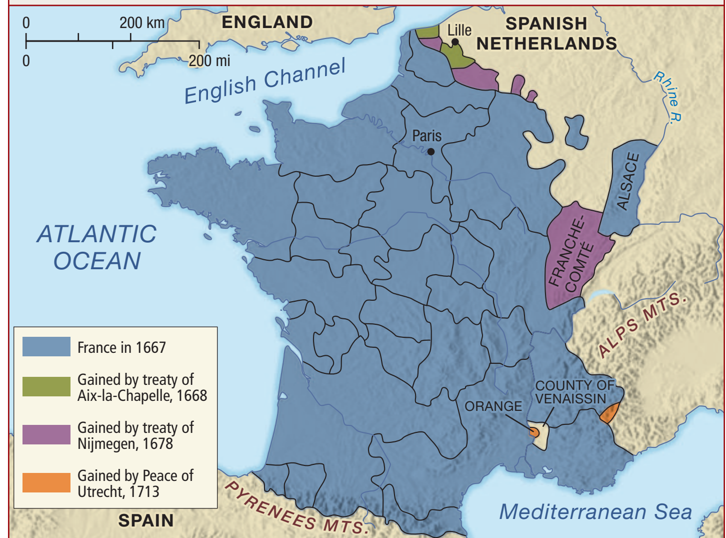
The Age of Absolutism

Although monarchies had governed Europe for centuries, royal power had been limited by forces such as hereditary aristocracies and church hierarchies. In the seventeenth century, however, the French monarchy managed to undermine the power of aristocracy and church to establish a governance system based on royal absolutism. Europe's other monarchies, envious of France, sought to do likewise. The Austrian and Prussian monarchies achieved considerable success, but English rulers were compelled to share governing authority with Parliament.

The French Model of Absolute Government

FOUNDATION MAP 24.1 France in 1715

A French proverb tells us, "The natural borders of France are these: the Rhine, the Alps, and the Pyrenees." Louis XIV dedicated much of his 72-year reign, and much of France's blood and treasure, to transforming that saying into reality. Notice that most of his acquisitions moved France in the direction of the Rhine River. Why was Louis XIV unable to achieve his goal of expanding France to its "natural borders"?



Seventeenth-century French absolutism was a form of government in which no institution could check the power of the king (Map 24.1). This did not mean the monarch could do anything he wished; he was restricted by the kingdom's fundamental laws, derived from centuries of custom. For example, he could not change the national religion from Roman Catholicism to another faith, levy new taxes without the consent of representatives of society, or have someone executed without following legal procedures. The fundamental laws could not be changed, and the king was bound by them, as were all his subjects.

In practice, however, as long as the king respected the fundamental laws, he was nearly all-powerful. A French legislature existed in theory, but only the king could call it into session and even then he was not bound by its decisions. No legislature was summoned between 1614 and 1789. There was a judiciary, but its members were appointed by the king, who controlled their salaries and had the power to exile them for life. Technically royal edicts, to be valid, had to be registered by judicial tribunals known as parlements (*pahr-luh-MAWN*), but in practice the king could compel the parlements to do his will. By the close of the seventeenth century, the French monarchy exercised immense power.

Fundamental laws set boundaries on the power of French kings

Roots of French Absolutism. This accumulation of power was an outgrowth of the French Wars of Religion. Following this turmoil between 1562 and 1594, France's government was revived by King Henri IV, a former Huguenot who converted to Catholicism in 1593 once he saw that France would not accept a Protestant king. Five years later he guaranteed Huguenots' rights in the Edict of Nantes (Chapter 20). But Henri, a charming and outgoing back-slapper, governed France largely by the force of his attractive personality. It remained to be seen if a less appealing and talented monarch could rule France effectively.

In 1610, when Henri was succeeded by Louis XIII, the French monarchy was tested. Nine years old, sickly and shy, and dominated by his unpopular Florentine mother, the new king never developed a taste for state affairs. Instead he appointed a series of chief ministers to run the government. His early selections proved inept, but his last, Cardinal Richelieu (*RISH-lih-yoo*), turned out to be exceptionally competent. The cardinal devoted his 18 years in office to constructing the foundations for an absolute monarchy.

Richelieu strives to create absolutism

Richelieu's main goal was to strengthen the monarchy to such a degree that even an incapable ruler would not harm the country. To achieve this goal he sought to remove all obstacles to royal authority, thereby reducing the prospects for unrest should the king prove weak. The main obstacles were the Huguenots and the nobility.

Although he was a cardinal in the Catholic Church, Richelieu was no religious zealot; he was willing to allow Huguenots freedom of conscience and worship, guaranteed them by the Edict of Nantes. However, the edict had also granted them two hundred "places of safety," fortified towns in central and southern France protected by Protestant militia. To Richelieu, these places of safety were a threat to the monarchy: if Protestant forces invaded France, the fortified towns might support the enemy. So he convinced Louis XIII to annul this portion of the edict. The result was a Huguenot rebellion in 1627, supported by Protestant England. Richelieu led an army to crush the revolt, and a 1629 settlement allowed the Huguenots to retain their civil and religious rights, but not their places of safety.

Richelieu.

Richelieu also had no desire to destroy the French nobility; he was an aristocrat himself. But he wanted the nobles to support a strong monarchy and place the country's welfare above their own interests instead of promoting a weakened monarchy that they could manipulate. To undermine the nobility's power, Richelieu removed some of its privileges. He sent direct agents of the king throughout the country to assert the monarchy's control over local affairs, thus depriving nobles of much of their influence over ordinary citizens. To undercut noble control over the nation's defense, the cardinal also suggested a permanent, or "standing," army, but at the time, France's treasury could not bear the expense. For the next French monarch, however, a standing army was both essential and financially possible. This ruler, King Louis XIV (1643–1715), came to epitomize royal absolutism.

Louis XIV was only five years old when his father died in 1643, and Richelieu had died five months earlier. On Louis XIV's behalf, the Queen Mother ruled as regent while Cardinal Jules Mazarin (*mah-zah-RAN*) served as chief minister. Regencies were always dangerous for a monarchy, as its foes might try to take advantage of inexperienced leadership. In this case a conspiracy of French nobles who hated Richelieu's policies used an extended war with Spain as a pretext to move against Mazarin and reverse the trend toward absolutism. This rebellion, known as the **Fronde** (*FRAHND*), lasted from 1648 to 1653.

The Fronde attempts to reverse progress toward absolutism

The Fronde drove Mazarin into exile in Switzerland, but the conspirators failed to intimidate the young king and the Queen Mother into supporting them. They had placed the royal family under house arrest and threatened their lives, but had no plan for how to proceed in the absence of royal support. Reluctant to harm or overthrow the king, they ruled France so badly that the exiled Mazarin found it easy to raise money to hire a mercenary army in Switzerland. This army then liberated the royal captives and defeated the conspiracy.

Despite the Fronde's ultimate failure, the experience left a powerful impression on Louis XIV. Traumatized by the danger to himself and his mother, he emerged embittered at the nobility and convinced that its power must be broken. He allowed Mazarin to remain chief minister and learned statecraft from him until the cardinal's death in 1661. Then, at age 23, Louis XIV began 54 years of directing French affairs himself, strengthening the monarchy by centralizing the government.

LOUIS XIV AND THE CONSOLIDATION OF ABSOLUTISM. Centralization of authority required a large bureaucracy. The king stood at the top of it, setting overall policy, sometimes

intervening actively in decision-making but often leaving daily business to his ministers. Louis XIV appointed ministers to head various government departments, with each minister reporting to the king individually. Through such one-on-one sessions the king maintained direct personal control over the operation of each department.

Louis XIV moves against the nobility

This degree of personal control was unprecedented in French history, and it gave Louis the means to undermine the power of the nobility. He reserved positions in government for commoners, whose advancement would depend upon him alone and whose loyalty to him would therefore be unquestioned. Nobles were never placed in influential positions that might enable them again to conspire against the king or obstruct the development of absolutism.

Louis XIV.

The nobles' opposition to this system was a threat to Louis, who addressed it with a carefully crafted program centered on construction of a magnificent palace in the Paris suburb of Versailles (*vehr-SIGH*). Completed in 1682, it stood as testimonial to the greatness of Louis XIV, who now called himself the "Sun King." With accommodations for ten thousand people, gorgeously manicured grounds, a reflecting pool arranged to catch the rays of the sun on the summer solstice, and a fabulous Hall of Mirrors, the palace of Versailles even today remains so breathtaking that it is easy to overlook the political cunning behind its beauty.

Versailles was crucial to Louis's plans, because nowhere else in France could so many aristocrats be housed in luxurious surroundings. Nobles who lived there received honorary positions entitling them to wait upon His Majesty and look important while doing so. But while carrying rich allowances and boundless dignity, these positions provided no power. Moreover, by assembling the greatest aristocrats of the realm in one place, the king could have them spied on by his servants, who were ordered to report instances of treasonous behavior. The technique was similar to that of Japan's Tokugawa shoguns, who forced their daimyo to live in Edo (Chapter 21). The effect was to strengthen Louis's ability to exercise real power.

French commercial dominance proves crucial to absolutism

The French nobility was thus increasingly isolated from French governance, and Louis worked tirelessly to accomplish just that. Presiding over Europe's wealthiest country, he appointed the astute Jean-Baptiste Colbert as minister of finance, charging him with organizing the economy so as to maximize tax receipts. Colbert shared Louis's conviction that absolutism could not be realized without the foundation provided by a powerful economy and commercial dominance. The creation of a strong urban middle class would enrich the kingdom while providing the monarchy with a consistent revenue stream with which to implement royal policies. When Colbert succeeded, in part by encouraging overseas expansion through monopolistic trading companies (Chapter 22), Louis took the increased revenues and built the permanent army of Richelieu's dreams. The king could not prevent nobles from becoming officers, but he made sure that his war ministers were commoners. Moreover, Louis perfected Richelieu's system of direct royal agents, depriving aristocrats of most of their influence in local politics. Small wonder the nobility detested absolutism.

Louis XIV sees religion as a component of absolutism

Louis XIV's efforts to subject France to his royal will extended into the religious sphere. His best-known motto, "I am the state," was complemented by "One faith, one law, one king." Although a staunch Catholic, Louis also believed that the French Church should be somewhat independent of Rome. Louis thus clashed with the pope, who at one point secretly excommunicated him. Louis also outraged much of Western Christendom

in 1683 by refusing to send French troops to Vienna to fight the Ottoman Turks, who were invading Europe from the southeast.

Louis had no reservations about defying Rome or allowing the Ottoman threat to weaken his enemy Austria, but he was inflexible about Protestantism. Considering the Huguenots heretics who must be removed from his kingdom in accordance with the motto, "One faith, one law, one king," in 1685 he revoked the Edict of Nantes and insisted that all Huguenots convert to Catholicism. The result was a series of forced conversions, as well as a mass emigration of Huguenots to Prussia, Holland, or British North America in search of religious freedom. Louis's Huguenot policy damaged France economically, since many who fled were merchants or artisans. In the end, Louis's efforts to enforce "One faith, one law, one king" demonstrated that even an absolute monarch could not have everything his way.

Yet Louis achieved much during his lengthy reign. He consolidated his authority as an absolute monarch and made France Europe's dominant power. But he also fought four wars that nearly bankrupted France, largely because he never got around to reforming its taxation system. This failure, even more than his intolerance of the Huguenots, threatened absolutism itself and eventually, in 1789, led to revolution.

Absolutism in Central Europe

Absolute monarchies develop elsewhere in Europe

France's power was the envy of other rulers, particularly in Central Europe, where the sprawling Holy Roman Empire dominated a region that included numerous small German states, the Netherlands, Austria, Bohemia, Switzerland, and parts of northern Italy. Its emperor, almost always from Austria's Habsburg family, was not absolute. He was elected by prominent local rulers who were largely autonomous in domestic matters. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, however, absolute monarchies arose in Central Europe's two most powerful states: Austria and Prussia.

Austria's Multinational Absolutism. The Peace of Westphalia, which ended the Thirty Years War in 1648, destroyed the hopes of the Austrian Habsburgs to transform the Holy Roman Empire into a centralized German Catholic state (Map 24.2). Although they continued, with one exception, to be elected as emperors, they had little control over most of the more than three hundred states that made up this so-called empire. But the Habsburgs were still hereditary rulers in Austria and Bohemia, and were routinely elected kings of Hungary, most of which had been under Ottoman control since the 1520s. The Habsburgs sought to regain Hungary and to tighten their domination over the areas they ruled directly, hoping to transform south central Europe into an absolute monarchy.

Habsburgs attempt to build a multinational form of absolutism

Initially the Habsburgs had mixed success. They created a standing army, but were nearly destroyed by the Ottoman Turks, who besieged Vienna in 1683. The Austrian capital's rescue by the King of Poland's multinational army marked a major turning point in Habsburg fortunes, as Austrian armies went on to drive the Turks out of Hungary by 1699. In the process, the Habsburgs compelled the Hungarian nobles to accept them as hereditary rather than elective monarchs. It appeared that a new empire was taking shape in south central Europe.

This empire was actually three distinct realms ruled by the same person. Austria, Bohemia, and Hungary each had its own separate assembly, its own language (respectively

Map 24.2 Growth of Austria and Prussia, 1648–1763

The Thirty Years War (1618–1648) prevented the Austrian Habsburg dynasty from reversing the Protestant Reformation and establishing Catholic religious and political control of Central Europe. Responding to this disappointment, the Habsburgs reemphasized their Austrian roots and worked toward the development of absolute monarchy. Note that their territorial gains in wars with the Ottoman Empire moved the Habsburg monarchy southeast, away from Germany and toward the Black Sea. How did the Great Elector of Prussia, Frederick William, react to Austria's southeastward orientation?

German, Czech, and Magyar), and its own laws and customs. Despite Habsburg efforts to run the empire from Vienna, the Bohemian and Hungarian nobles jealously protected their national identities and privileges, and in 1703, when they felt their privileges threatened, the Hungarians revolted.

In response, the Habsburgs acknowledged that each realm must be governed by its own fundamental laws and customs, and they promised that as hereditary monarchs they would diligently respect those different traditions. In return, they would rule as absolute monarchs, unconstrained by other institutions. Fearful of the growing power of Prussia, Russia, and France, the Bohemian and Hungarian nobles eventually accepted this arrangement. Thus, by the early eighteenth century, a multinational form of absolutism was emerging in the Habsburg domains.

Prussian Absolutism: Nobility and Monarch. Another type of absolutism originated to Austria's north in Brandenburg, a medium-sized state centered on the city of Berlin. Its

ruler was a member of the Hohenzollern (*HŌ-un-ZAH-lurn*) family, which in 1618 also inherited the duchy of Prussia southeast of the Baltic Sea. Although the two lands were separated by more than one hundred miles, they formed the nucleus of a new great power that would rise to prominence on the might of its army.

Prussia builds absolutism around its army

In 1640, 20-year old Frederick William von Hohenzollern became ruler of Brandenburg-Prussia. Dismayed by the weakness of his divided state, he set out to strengthen his armies. By 1648 he had developed an eight thousand–man force, and then used it to annex eastern Pomerania, connecting Brandenburg to the Baltic Sea. In the following years, to strengthen his armies further, he agreed to give his nobles, known as **Junkers** (*YOONG-kers*), complete control over their peasants and exemption from taxes in return for loyal military service. As a result, most Junker families furnished officers to the army, while the rest of the people were forced to pay very heavy taxes and the peasants were reduced to full serfdom. Before he died in 1688, Frederick William had brought his scattered lands under centralized rule and created a forty thousand–man army.

By the early eighteenth century Prussia was moving rapidly toward absolutism. The Hohenzollern policy of cooperating with the Junkers in establishing serfdom gave these nobles a stake in a powerful monarchy. In exchange for tax exemptions and peasant labor services, they willingly granted the Hohenzollerns extensive political authority, although their control of the officer corps gave them significant leverage against the monarch. No legislature could check the kings of Prussia, but the army certainly could, a fact no Hohenzollern ruler could forget. Prussian absolutism, unlike the French version, was consolidated in a partnership between nobility and ruler.

SOCIAL BASES OF EUROPEAN ABSOLUTISM. Absolutism in Austria and Prussia differed from that of France, largely due to differences in the ability of nobles to control the peasantry. France, where most peasants were free, had a strong middle class made up of educated urban professionals and wealthy merchant capitalists. These townsfolk helped the monarchy offset the nobility, serving as state officials and providing the ruler with money for hiring armies and bureaucrats. Austria and Prussia, by contrast, lacked strong middle classes, so their monarchs had to rely on nobles to collect the taxes, staff the bureaucracies, and run the armies. In return for such services, the nobles were given full authority over their peasants.

Absolutism in Austria and Prussia is based on the aristocracy and serfdom

The result in Austria and Prussia was a mixture of absolutism with aristocracy: monarchs controlled the central government and exercised vast power, but nobles enjoyed extensive privileges. With no real constraints on how they ran their estates, nobles had almost total control over the peasants who lived there. While peasants in France were legally free, those in Austria and Prussia were serfs. Technically they were not slaves, since they were attached to the soil and were not supposed to be bought and sold apart from the land and their families. In practice, however, they might as well have been slaves. They could not marry, or even leave the estate, without their lord's consent. They were typically forced to work three to six days a week on the lord's lands, or in some places to give him a share of their own crops. They were subject to the whim of the lord, who was free to impose penalties such as flogging that could lead to injury or death.

Austrian and Prussian peasants lived in villages on the lord's estates. Their communities were patriarchal, dominated by village elders and male heads of households. A village assembly composed of such men usually decided which families worked which

fields, paid which taxes, or provided military recruits. Marriages were arranged by parents; the wife was subject to her husband and typically at his mercy. Men's drunkenness and abuse of their wives were common, pleasures and diversions were few, and everyone lived at the mercy of the weather, the crops, and the landlord.

A vast gulf existed between upper and lower classes in Austria and Prussia. They often spoke different languages: educated nobles conversed in German, while peasants spoke local dialects. Rulers and nobles typically lived in luxury, while the vast majority of people were illiterate, impoverished, and subservient.

Despite its superficial similarity, then, absolutism in Austria and Prussia was not the same as in France. In France, where nobles were weak and peasants were free, the monarch's power rested on the shoulders of a strong urban middle class, but in Austria and Prussia executive power was based on the aristocracy and serfdom.

Prussian soldiers.

The English Alternative to Absolutism

In England the monarchs, like those in France and Central Europe, sought to construct an absolute monarchy in the seventeenth century. They were blocked, however, by Parliament, a medieval legislature with a House of Lords made up of prominent nobles and a House of Commons representing wealthy commoners. In England, unlike elsewhere, the nobles and middle classes worked together to restrict the ruler, creating thereby a **limited monarchy** that served as an English alternative to absolutism.

PARLIAMENT VERSUS THE KING. England's Parliament was a representative body summoned by monarchs whenever they needed money and soldiers. King Henry VIII (1509–1547) had skillfully manipulated Parliament during the English Reformation, and his daughter Queen Elizabeth I (1558–1603) had also done so during her conflicts with Spain (Chapter 20). Yet Parliament could and did restrict the power of the monarch, and it prevented the emergence of royal absolutism in England.

England's Parliament limits the monarch's power

In Elizabeth's reign, Parliament was increasingly dominated by wealthy members of the House of Commons rather than by nobles in the House of Lords. This shift reflected the growth of English commerce, which brought prosperity to merchants, bankers, and other commoners. Many such people purchased land in the country, established themselves as landed gentry, and represented rural constituencies in Parliament. Literate and vocal, they demanded influence proportional to their economic status.

In 1603, Elizabeth I died unmarried and childless. The throne passed to King James VI of Scotland, son of her executed cousin Mary Stuart, thus initiating England's Stuart dynasty. Ruling in England as King James I (r. 1603–1625), he aimed to establish an absolute monarchy. But James was a spendthrift and a foreigner whose Scottish mannerisms irritated the English. A smart man who was not particularly practical, he repeatedly requested money from Parliament to finance recurring wars with Spain and interventions abroad on behalf of endangered Protestants. These requests were a source of tension between king and Parliament.

Financial disputes frustrate English kings' ambitions for absolute monarchy

James's son Charles I (r. 1625–1649), frustrated with these fiscal restrictions, sought ways to bypass Parliament and make his own laws. Distrusting the Stuarts, Parliament responded by refusing to approve new taxes, instead drawing up a "Petition of Right" that denounced the king's forcing wealthy people to lodge soldiers in their homes and

imprisoning his subjects without due process of law. Religion complicated the tension, as many members of Parliament were Calvinist Christians who did not belong to the Anglican Church or recognize the authority of the king as its head. These **Puritans** considered Anglicanism too much like Roman Catholicism, and they developed their own simplified church. In sum, the Stuart kings stood for absolutism and Anglican supremacy; Parliament stood against both.

Charles I rules without Parliament

In 1629, after four tense years, Charles and Parliament deadlocked. Since Parliament could meet only when called by the king, Charles sent it home and ruled without it until 1640. This **Eleven Years' Tyranny** violated centuries of English custom and alienated many. Charles hoped to apply in England the modern ideas of absolute monarchy that were evolving in France, but Parliament stood firm in asserting the medieval right of a legislative body to authorize taxation. These were important differences, and they may have been ultimately irreconcilable, but the failure of executive and legislature to engage in honest dialogue over such crucial matters eventually plunged England into civil war.

In his struggle with Parliament, Charles began in a strong position but made major mistakes. When he raised revenues by reviving old taxes, many considered this an effort to tax without parliamentary consent. When he attempted to impose the Anglican Church in Calvinist Scotland, where he was also king, he prompted a revolt by the Scots. To raise money to put down this revolt, he was forced to recall Parliament in 1640. By this time the possibility of reasoned discussion had ended.

THE ENGLISH CIVIL WAR AND PURITAN REVOLUTION. The new Parliament, which sat from 1640 to 1660, gave Charles the funds he requested but took action to restrain him. It impeached two of his close advisors, one of whom was executed. It passed a law requiring Parliament to meet every three years with or without the king's call, and another law prohibiting dissolution of Parliament without its own consent. These actions asserted new rights never before claimed by Parliament. When, in 1641, it drew up a list of grievances suffered during Charles's reign, the king ordered the arrest of five of its leaders. Parliament refused to hand them over, whereupon Charles withdrew to the north of England, assembled an army, and prepared for civil war.

Parliament's assertion of new rights forces a civil war

The king drew his soldiers (known as Cavaliers) from the rural north and west, while Parliament's forces (called Roundheads because of their short haircuts) came from the more urban and commercial regions in the south and east. To gain Scottish support, Parliament made Calvinist Presbyterianism the official religion of England, Scotland, and Ireland. Oliver Cromwell, a parliamentary leader, developed the Ironside Army, a military force driven by a nearly fanatical Puritanism. The Ironsides became the conflict's finest soldiers, forcing Charles in 1646 to surrender to the Scots, who turned him over to Parliament the next year.

Had Parliament wanted simply to remove Charles, it could have selected another family to rule England. But Cromwell and the army wanted more than a change of dynasty; they wanted a Puritan Revolution. Fearing that a new king, to reclaim the monarch's religious authority, might restore the Anglican Church, they decided to try Charles for treason, execute him, and abolish the monarchy. Many in Parliament refused to go along with such extreme measures, so Cromwell purged it, reducing it to a Rump Parliament of about sixty members. This minority condemned and beheaded Charles I in 1649.

For the next four years, Cromwell governed with the Rump Parliament. In 1651 he invaded Ireland, massacring Catholics in retaliation for the butchering of Protestants in the northern region of Ulster ten years earlier. Protestant landlords were installed throughout the island, and the Catholic Church was driven underground. That same year Cromwell won naval engagements against the Dutch and Spanish, asserting English maritime commercial supremacy in the North Atlantic.

Cromwell fails to consolidate a republic

In 1653, Cromwell dismissed the Rump and effectively became a dictator, known as the Lord Protector. He was challenged, however, by extremist forces released by his own revolution. Levellers stood for expanded voting rights, a written constitution, and equal rights for all men. Quakers preached pacifism, rejecting formal worship in favor of personal testimony inspired by one's mystical "inner light." Fifth Monarchy Men saw the end of the world approaching and yearned for the rule of Christ, whom they saw as the fifth monarch in a sequence including Sennacherib of Assyria, Cyrus the Great of Persia, Alexander the Great, and Caesar Augustus. Facing such divisive factions, Cromwell found no support among Anglicans, who despised him for displacing their church, or among royalists, who hated him for killing their king. His death in 1658 made it possible for the army in 1660 to restore the monarchy, much to almost everyone's relief.

Oliver Cromwell.

Charles II restores the Stuart dynasty

The Stuart Restoration and Glorious Revolution. A decade without a king convinced the English that, whatever its flaws, monarchy was a vital unifying institution. So they restored the Stuarts in the person of King Charles II (r. 1660–1685), son of the beheaded Charles I. Eager to keep his own head, Charles II generally respected parliamentary rights, while Parliament restored the Anglican Church and acknowledged the new king's authority. Tall, handsome, and courteous, he quickly earned the nickname "the merry monarch" for his love of parties and the theater, his reluctance to take himself too seriously, and his extensive familiarity with ladies' bedrooms. Even those who opposed his policies found him hard to dislike.

The great irony of Charles' reign was the religious question. His father, an Anglican, had faced a Parliament dominated by Puritans; now the Parliament was solidly Anglican, but Charles' sympathies lay with Catholicism (although he did not convert until he lay dying in 1685). Aware of these sympathies, in 1673 Parliament passed the Test Act, requiring that all office holders be Anglicans. The first to resign as a consequence was the Lord High Admiral, James, the king's younger brother, a declared Catholic and next in line for the throne, since Charles had no legitimate children. If and when James became king, renewed religious turmoil seemed a certainty.

Charles II's attitude toward Catholicism was tempered by his political realism. Although he admired the French monarchy of Louis XIV, who had sheltered him in the 1650s, Charles was too realistic to try copying it in England. He never provoked Parliament beyond its endurance, and Parliament, fearful of an openly Catholic king, cooperated with him while hoping he would outlive his younger brother. He did not.

When Charles II died in 1685, his Catholic brother became King James II. A man of limited intellect, James antagonized even his allies by his clear favoritism toward Catholics and his blundering dealings with Parliament. James, however, was already in his 50s, and most expected that the throne would eventually pass to his Protestant daughter Mary, wed to the Dutch leader William of Orange. But when, in 1688, James's second wife gave birth to a son, England faced the prospect of a continuous line of Catholic kings.

Parliament takes action against Catholic absolutism

James II actually thought he could restore Catholicism, but Parliament resisted. Its leaders went to Holland and offered to help his daughter Mary seize the English throne. But her husband William, eager to lead England into an alliance against Louis XIV, insisted on becoming king. Once it was agreed that William and Mary could reign jointly, in 1689 they invaded England with a sizable army.

These developments culminated in the **Glorious Revolution**, a cooperative effort by Parliament and the invaders to overthrow James II. The king was removed with very little bloodshed. Unable to find support in England, he fled to Ireland and raised a Catholic army, which was defeated in 1690 by the new King William III. James then fled to France, where he and his heirs launched claims to the English throne for decades.

The Bill of Rights defines England as a constitutional monarchy

In 1689, Parliament passed a **Bill of Rights**, a written document specifying the rights that William and Mary were required to endorse as conditions of their rule. No taxes could be levied without parliamentary approval; the monarchs could not ignore or violate any law passed by Parliament; no one could be imprisoned without due process of law. These conditions created a contractual relationship between the ruler and Parliament, defining England as a limited monarchy.

To many Europeans, the English alternative of limited monarchy seemed an outmoded, ineffective concept, reflecting old medieval notions of power shared between king and nobles. But the notion that government has a contractual duty to ensure people's rights, embedded in the English alternative, was soon regarded as a modern, progressive concept, owing to an intellectual revolution that was challenging many beliefs about science and society.

Europe's Intellectual Revolution

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, while Western society was still in the turmoil of religious upheavals and witch hunts, innovative European thinkers, their horizons broadened by discoveries in the Americas of plants, animals, and human societies previously unknown in Europe, began an intellectual revolution. Using new approaches and techniques, they achieved dramatic breakthroughs in science and advanced new ideas about governance, human rights, economics, and gender roles. At first the new concepts, confined mainly to the educated elite, had little effect on common people's lives or thinking, still largely shaped by family, farming, and faith. In time, however, Europe's intellectual revolution had a profound and global impact.

The Scientific Revolution

European thinkers challenge ancient beliefs

For many centuries, scientific understanding in the West derived largely from ancient thinkers—Egyptians, Mesopotamians, and Greeks—as developed and expanded by Islamic scholars of the eighth through twelfth centuries. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, however, European thinkers advanced new ideas that challenged these old beliefs. The new science they developed was based on the discovery of mechanical laws said to govern the physical universe.

The Spread of Scientific Knowledge. Prior to the seventeenth century, Western understanding of the universe was based mainly on a system devised in the fourth century

B.C.E. by the eminent Greek philosopher Aristotle. Among other things, this system put the Earth at the center of the universe, surrounded by transparent paths on which the sun, moon, planets, and stars revolved. In the second century C.E., however, observing that the planets did not orbit the Earth in unchanging paths as suggested by Aristotle, the Egyptian astronomer Claudius Ptolemy (*TAH-luh-mē*) proposed that the planets moved around the Earth on separate and irregular paths. For centuries thereafter, astronomers mainly sought to perfect Ptolemy's system by making minor adjustments in it.

Islamic thought makes Europe's scientific revolution possible

The legacy of Aristotle and Ptolemy, lost to the West in the early Middle Ages, was reclaimed and built upon by Muslim thinkers in the eighth through twelfth centuries (Chapter 12). Ibn Sina and Ibn Rushd, for example, expanded upon Aristotle's works, while al-Khwarizmi and Ibn al-Haytham modified Ptolemy's system. As contacts with the Islamic world brought such knowledge to Europe, Western scholarship mainly sought to elaborate and refine it.

A 1667 representation of the Copernican view of the universe.

NEW SCIENTIFIC PERSPECTIVES. In the 1500s, however, a Polish monk named Nicholas Copernicus (*kō-PUR-nih-kus*) dared to challenge this approach. Others eventually followed, including German astronomer Johannes Kepler, English statesman Francis Bacon, and French mathematician René Descartes (*dā-CART*).

The Copernican system revolutionizes science

Troubled by the cumbersome complexity of Ptolemy's system, and perhaps inspired by Persian scholar Nasir al-Din al-Tusi's revised thirteenth-century model (Chapter 12), Copernicus advanced the radical notion that the Earth might not be the center of the universe. Perhaps, he argued in a work published in 1543, the paths of planets seem irregular because they orbit the sun, not the Earth, which is itself a planet circling the sun. The other planets do not really change directions; from the Earth they just seem to do so, since the Earth is moving too. At first almost everyone rejected the Copernican hypothesis. Christian leaders, Catholic and Protestant alike, saw it as denying their basic belief that humans are the center of God's creation. Common sense, moreover, seemed to show that the Earth could not be moving; if it were, things would fly off. Since scientists as yet had no instruments to test the hypothesis, and since its presumption of circular orbits failed to fully clarify the movements of planets, it was not generally accepted.

In the early seventeenth century, however, Johannes Kepler revised the hypothesis by proposing that planetary orbits are elliptical, not circular. He also suggested that there is a precise mathematical relationship between a planet's speed and its distance from the sun: the closer it gets to the sun, the faster it travels. These observations revived the Copernican hypothesis and prepared the way for further discoveries.

Title page from *Novvum Organum*.

In England, Francis Bacon, a lawyer and statesman with practical scientific interests, called for a new approach to scientific study. In his *Novum Organum* (*NŌ-voom or-GAH-noom*), roughly meaning "New Methodology," Bacon challenged scholars to focus on observing reality rather than simply analyzing the works of past thinkers, a practice he saw as merely perpetuating old beliefs. To understand reality, he insisted, scientists must set aside traditional preconceptions and examine the world anew, using an empirical approach involving extensive observation and rigorous experimentation. He thereby helped lay the groundwork for the modern scientific method.

Like Bacon, René Descartes called for creation of a new science based on observation and experimentation. Unlike Bacon, however, Descartes foresaw that the new science would be grounded in mathematics, relying heavily on measurement, quantification, formulas, and

equations. Descartes, moreover, developed a new system of understanding that was not based on the work of Aristotle or any other thinker. In his most important work, *Discourse on Method* (1637), Descartes subjected all previous knowledge to systematic doubt, concluding that the only thing he could be sure of was his own existence: he reasoned that since he was able to think, he must in fact exist. Beginning with the statement *cogito ergo sum* (*KŌ-jē-tō AIR-gō SOOM*), "I think, therefore I am," he devised a new philosophy dividing all reality into two main entities: "thinking substance," or the subjective realm of the mind and spirit, and "extended substance," or the objective world of matter. By separating the study of material things that can be measured from spiritual things that cannot, he helped to separate science from religion and philosophy; by stressing mathematics, he inspired the search for mechanical laws that govern the material universe.

Galileo's Discoveries and Newton's Synthesis. This search for mechanical laws was decisively advanced by Galileo Galilei (*gal-ih-LĀ-ō gal-ih-LĀ-ē*), an Italian scientist who discovered new laws of acceleration and motion, and verified the Copernican hypothesis. The search was then carried further by the English scientist Isaac Newton, who blended the discoveries of Galileo and others into an overall synthesis depicting the universe as a mechanism that operates in accordance with mathematical laws.

Galileo grounds science in observation rather than revelation

Using his own inventions, such as the pendulum and telescope, to improve his measurements and observations, Galileo combined creative thinking with experimentation and mathematical logic, thus blending the approaches used by Copernicus, Bacon, and Descartes. Using a pendulum to time balls of different weight rolling down inclined planes, for example, Galileo observed that falling bodies actually pick up speed as they fall and that they accelerate at the same rate no matter what they weigh. He concluded that the rate of acceleration of falling bodies is a constant that can be expressed in a precise mathematical formula.

Galileo's view of the moon.

Building on the work of Copernicus and Kepler, Galileo probed the heavens with his telescope. He observed, among other things, craters on the moon, thousands of previously unknown stars, and moons that orbited Jupiter. These discoveries demolished old beliefs that the heavens are perfect and finite, and that all heavenly bodies orbit the Earth. In his classic *Dialogue on the Two Chief World Systems* (1632), Galileo ridiculed those who held these old beliefs, asserting instead that his observations validated the hypotheses of Copernicus and Kepler.

Galileo thereby brought upon himself the wrath of the Catholic Church, which in 1616 had condemned the Copernican hypothesis as contrary to Church teachings. Imprisoned and tried at age 68 by the Roman Inquisition, the Church's main agency for combating heresy, Galileo was forced to renounce his views. Devastated by the experience, ailing and later blind, he spent the rest of his days under house arrest, where he nonetheless continued his mechanical experiments. But the impact of his work could not be suppressed. As others used their own telescopes and did their own mathematical calculations, they reached the same conclusions that Galileo reached. Their new science was based on observation and measurement, not on revelation or religious authority.

Later in the seventeenth century, Isaac Newton assimilated and consolidated the work of Galileo and others, creating a new synthesis to explain how the universe functioned. In 1687 he published a monumental work called *The Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*, often simply called the *Principia* (*prin-CHĒ-pē-uh*), from its Latin title. In it

he showed that the force causing Galileo's falling bodies to accelerate at a constant rate was the same force that held the heavenly bodies in place and defined their orbits. He further concluded that this force, called gravity, can be measured and described in a concise mathematical formula, based on the mass of the objects involved and the distance between them. The universe, it appeared, was one huge mechanism that functioned according to natural laws, which were valid everywhere and always.

Newton explains the functioning of the universe

Newton's ideas were breathtaking and profound. His earlier work in optics had already marked him as a genius; now his discovery of the law of gravity raised him to the level of a new Aristotle. The poet Alexander Pope, a contemporary of Newton, paid him the supreme tribute: "Nature and nature's laws lay hid in night; God said 'Let Newton be,' and all was light."

The Enlightenment

The European Enlightenment values reason above tradition

The scientific achievements of the seventeenth century, along with growing global knowledge of varied lands and peoples, created great ferment among European intellectuals. By observing societies in Africa, Asia, and the Americas, they had become open to new ways of thinking and being. By challenging traditional ideals, and by systematic observation and analysis, they had begun to develop a new kind of science. Now thinkers in areas such as politics, justice, economics, and gender roles sought to make similar advances. Their efforts produced the **Enlightenment**, a European intellectual movement inspired by boundless faith in human reason. Enlightenment thinkers sought to use reason to achieve progress in all areas of human endeavor.

Title page of *Leviathan*.

New Perspectives on Governance. Rational reassessment of human governance was initiated by Thomas Hobbes, an English supporter of absolutism, who in 1651 published a book called *Leviathan*. Horrified by King Charles I's beheading in 1649, Hobbes argued vehemently on behalf of absolute monarchy. He based his case, however, not on religious authority but on secular reasoning, arguing that a single absolute power was essential for a stable society. According to Hobbes, humans are by nature selfish and violent, and human life in its original state was "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short," with each individual engaged in a chaotic "war of all against all." To escape this condition, he claimed, people surrender their freedom to the state in return for security and order, creating an unwritten contract between ruler and subjects.

Although Hobbes championed absolute power, his idea of a contract implied that the ruler had a duty to maintain order and protect the public welfare. But would the contract still apply if the monarch failed to do so? According to Hobbes it would: the danger of violence and chaos was so great the monarch's power must be unconditional, even if the actual ruler was incompetent, corrupt, or tyrannical.

Hobbes and Locke focus on contractual government

Later thinkers took a different approach to Hobbes's concept of contract. One was John Locke, an immensely influential English thinker. In *Two Treatises of Government* (1689), Locke argued that all people are born with natural rights, which he identified as life, liberty, and property, and that government is obligated to protect these rights. If it fails to do so, and instead proves abusive or despotic, it has broken the contract, and the people have the right to unseat it, forming a new government that better meets their needs. Governments, he implied, get their authority from the people they rule. Locke's

Document 24.1 John Locke—Excerpts from The Second Treatise of Civil Government

Writing just before the Glorious Revolution in England, John Locke set forth an inspiring vision of a civil society in which government is legitimate only insofar as it protects the life, liberty, and property of the individual and enjoys the confidence of those who are governed.

The state of nature has a law of nature to govern it which obliges every one; and reason, which is that law, teaches all mankind who will but consult it that, being all equal and independent, no one ought to harm another in his life, health, liberty, or possessions . . .

Men being, as has been said, by nature all free, equal, and independent, no one can be put out of his estate and subjected to the political power of another without his own consent. The only way whereby any one divests himself of his natural liberty, and puts on the bonds of a civil society, is by agreeing with other men to join and unite into a community for their comfortable, safe, and peaceable living one amongst another, in a secure enjoyment of their properties and a greater security against any that are not of it . . .

The great and chief end, therefore, of men's uniting into commonwealths and putting themselves under government is the preservation of their property . . .

. . . when the government is dissolved, the people are at liberty to provide for themselves by erecting a new legislative, differing from the other by the change of persons or form, or both, as they shall find it most for their safety and good . . .

SOURCE: John Locke, *The Second Treatise of Civil Government* (New York: Vintage Books, 1947), 123, 168–169, 184, 232.

Treatises seemed to justify the Glorious Revolution of 1688–1689, in which the English replaced a despotic ruler with new ones pledged to defend the people's rights. Locke also advanced the philosophy of knowledge. In his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690), he rejected the long-held assumption that people are born with ideas. Influenced by Ibn Tufayl (*too-FILE*), a twelfth-century Muslim who wrote about a person growing up alone on an island, Locke asserted that at birth all minds are like a blank slate, or *tabula rasa* (*TAHB-yoo-lah RAH-sah*), and that ideas are shaped by environment and experience. In stark contrast to prevailing notions of nobility and race, Locke held that all humans are equal at birth; what each becomes is determined by interaction with the surrounding world (see "John Locke—Excerpts from *The Second Treatise of Civil Government*").

Locke's ideas had a huge impact. European political philosophers, and later revolutionaries in the Americas and France, found inspiration in his notions that humans are born equal with natural rights, that governments have a duty to protect these rights, and that people are entitled to change or remove a regime that fails to do so. In 1776, in the American Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson used Locke's views to inspire and justify the American Revolution (Chapter 26).

Another new perspective on governance was provided by Baron Montesquieu (*MŌNT-usk-yoo*), a French aristocrat who in 1748 published *The Spirit of Laws*. Using an empirical approach, he examined various political systems to determine what worked best. He concluded that no system was ideal and that the best form of government for any given state depended on its size, climate, economy, and traditions. Democracy, for example, seemed best for small city-states with homogeneous populations, while monarchy was best for large, diverse empires.

Document 24.2 Montesquieu—Excerpts from *The Spirit of Laws*

In 1748, the Baron de Montesquieu suggested that the separation of the executive, legislative, and judicial powers of government is essential to the maintenance of liberty and the avoidance of tyranny.

In every government there are three sorts of power: the legislative; the executive in respect to things dependent on the law of nations; and the executive in regard to matters that depend on the civil law.

By virtue of the first, the prince or magistrate enacts temporary or perpetual laws, and amends or abrogates those that have been already enacted. By the second, he makes peace or war, sends or receives embassies, establishes the public security, and provides against invasions. By the third, he punishes criminals, or determines the disputes that arise between individuals. The latter we shall call the judiciary power, and the other simply the executive power of the state . . .

When the legislative and executive powers are united in the same person, there can be no liberty; because apprehension may arise, lest the same monarch or senate should enact tyrannical laws, to execute them in a tyrannical manner.

Again, there is no liberty, if the judiciary power be not separated from the legislative and executive. Were it joined with the legislative, the life and liberty of the subject would be exposed to arbitrary control; for the judge would be then the legislator. Were it joined to the executive power, the judge might behave with violence and oppression . . .

As in a country of liberty, every man who is supposed to be a free agent ought to be his own governor; the legislative power should reside in the whole body of the people. But since this is impossible in large states, and in small ones is subject to many inconveniences, it is fit the people should transact by their representatives what they cannot transact by themselves . . .

SOURCE: Charles de Secondat, Baron de Montesquieu, *The Spirit of Laws*, translated by Thomas Nugent (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952), 69–71.

Montesquieu nonetheless preferred a mixed system that drew on the best features of each form of government. Here his model was Britain, which to him seemed to have a fortunate combination of monarchy (the king), aristocracy (the House of Lords), and representative democracy (the House of Commons). Since the power of each was balanced by the other two, he concluded, this arrangement could prevent the sort of unchecked absolutism that had emerged in his native France. Montesquieu's ideas about the balance and separation of power (see "Montesquieu—Excerpts from *The Spirit of Laws*") later influenced the framers of the United States Constitution.

Montesquieu describes a government in which power resides in separate institutions that balance one another

The Philosophes: Progress and Social Justice. Montesquieu was one of the eminent French thinkers called **philosophes** (*FĒ-luh-ZŌF*) who dominated the Enlightenment in the eighteenth century. Philosophes espoused **deism**, a rational religion that viewed God not as a divinity involved deeply in human affairs but as a kind of master mechanic or "great watchmaker" who created the universe as a vast machine, established the laws by which it operates, and then mostly left it alone. But above all philosophes believed in reason and progress. They were convinced that society would steadily improve if great thinkers applied reason and scientific rigor to the study of human affairs and then published their work so others could build on it.

The spirit of the philosophes was exemplified by the great *Encyclopedia*, edited by the energetic philosophe Denis Diderot (*dē-deh-RŌ*). In a mammoth undertaking, Diderot and his colleagues gathered detailed articles by experts in numerous fields,

from art to astronomy to political theory, and then published them in 28 large volumes (1751–1772) to make them available to all. Convinced of the power of education and publicity, the editors expected thereby to advance all areas of human endeavor.

Illustration from the *Encyclopedia*.

But a philosophe called Voltaire, widely considered the Enlightenment's dominant figure, disputed this optimistic view. Raised in a middle-class French family and like Montesquieu an admirer of British ideas, Voltaire published works promoting the perceptions of Newton and Locke. Brilliant, sarcastic, and self-righteous, Voltaire was a passionate advocate of tolerance and freedom, an outspoken critic of France's monarchy and the Catholic Church, a crusader against injustice, and a champion of persons who had been abused by the wealthy and powerful.

For example, Voltaire's most famous work, *Candide* (1759), was written in response to a cataclysmic earthquake and tsunami that in 1751 had destroyed much of Lisbon, taking some thirty thousand lives. Subtitled *Optimism*, the book is a biting satire of the early Enlightenment's faith in progress. As the hero Candide and his beloved Cunegunde are exposed to war, torture, rape, disease, corruption, natural disaster, and religious persecution, Candide's teacher Dr. Pangloss repeatedly assures them that this is "the best of all possible worlds." This caricature was a none-too-subtle attack on such thinkers as German philosopher Gottfried Leibniz (*LĪP-nits*), who claimed that all events were necessary parts of God's overall design, and English poet Alexander Pope, who declared in his *Essay on Man* (1734) that "Whatever is, is right." To Voltaire, there was much that was wrong in the world, and a pressing need to combat injustice, ignorance, and oppression.

Voltaire and Rousseau argue for liberty

Like Voltaire, Jean-Jacques Rousseau (*roo-SŌ*), a Swiss-born French author and composer, was a champion of freedom and justice, but his ideas differed from those of other Enlightenment thinkers. Unlike Hobbes, who claimed that people were by nature selfish and violent, Rousseau believed that in the "state of nature" they were honest, unselfish, and free, and that greed, corruption, and oppression were introduced by organized society. Unlike Locke, who regarded property ownership as a natural right, Rousseau saw private property as a source of inequality and evil.

Rousseau's most famous work, *The Social Contract* (1762), began with the ringing phrase "All men are born free, but everywhere they are in chains" and went on to advocate a communal society based on harmony, equality, and virtue. Whereas Hobbes had depicted a contract *between* ruler and ruled, Rousseau envisioned one *among* all members of society. Whereas Locke had stressed individual rights, Rousseau stressed the common good as embodied in the "general will." Government's job was to determine and fulfill this will, not only responding to the desires of the majority but embracing the genuine needs of all people (see "Jean Jacques Rousseau—Excerpts from *The Social Contract*"). Later, believers in democracy and advocates of socialism found inspiration in Rousseau's ideas about community and equality.

Voltaire.

The Enlightenment's leading economic thinkers, known as **physiocrats**, included the Frenchmen François Quesnay (*kā-NĀ*), a former court physician at Versailles, and Anne-Robert Turgot (*toor-GŌ*), France's comptroller general in the 1770s. Convinced that increased production and trade would enhance national wealth, they sought to free producers and merchants from artificial restraints imposed by governments and guilds. The physiocrats thus promoted **laissez-faire** (*leh-sā FARE*), a French term meaning "let do" (that is, "let them do as they choose"), a policy that governments should not intervene in economic affairs.

Document 24.3 Jean Jacques Rousseau—Excerpts from *The Social Contract*

In 1762, Jean Jacques Rousseau addressed the problem of the tension between the rights of the individual and those of the community. He found the answer in the concept of a social contract, by which people voluntarily submit to collective government, and in doing so, ensure their individual freedoms.

The problem is to find a form of association which will defend and protect with the whole common force the person and goods of each associate, and in which each, while uniting himself with all, may still obey himself alone, and remain as free as before. This is the fundamental problem of which the *Social Contract* provides the solution . . .

. . . each man, in giving himself to all, gives himself to nobody; and as there is no associate over whom he does not acquire the same right as he yields others over himself, he gains an equivalent for everything he loses, and an increase of force for the preservation of what he has . . .

Each of us puts his person and all his power under the supreme direction of the general will, and, in our corporate capacity, we receive each member as an individual part of the whole . . .

This public person, so formed by the union of all other persons formerly took the name of *city*, and now takes that of *Republic* or *body politic*; it is called by its members *State* when passive, *Sovereign* when active, and *Power* when compared with others like itself. Those who are associated in it take collectively the name of *people*, and severally are called *citizens*, as sharing in the sovereign power, and *subjects*, as being under the laws of the State . . .

SOURCE: Jean Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, translated by G. D. H. Cole (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952), 391–392.The Physiocrats: Economic Freedom.

Adam Smith describes modern economic principles

These ideas were systematized and expanded by the Scotsman Adam Smith, the "father of modern economics," who in 1776 produced his classic *Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*. Smith condemned mercantilism, the prevailing practice in which governments established colonies and regulated commerce to produce a favorable balance of trade. Instead he claimed that, if the economy were left alone, the forces of self-interest and competition would work as an "invisible hand" to increase overall prosperity. Consumers would naturally seek to buy quality goods and services at reasonable prices. Producers and merchants who met these objectives would prosper. Those who could make and sell good shoes, for example, at lower prices than competitors, would attract more customers and make more money, a powerful incentive for other producers to meet customers' needs. Supply and demand rather than government, he argued, should regulate production and prices. As demand increased it would drive prices up, but ambitious producers would soon respond by increasing supply, and prices would go down. Over time, quality would improve, prices would fall, and the public welfare would be secured. In promoting such ideas, Smith shaped modern arguments for free-market capitalism.

GENDER AND THE ENLIGHTENMENT. With its focus on challenging traditional beliefs and securing people's rights, the Enlightenment also inspired discussion of what was then a revolutionary concept: the notion that women should have equal rights with men. Some philosophes, including the Marquis de Condorcet (*kōn-dor-SĀ*), argued that depriving women of such rights was irrational and unjust. Others, however, including Rousseau, saw it as unnatural for women to participate in public affairs.

Despite the persistence of such attitudes, some talented women played prominent roles in the Enlightenment. Condorcet's wife, Sophie, for example, translated Adam Smith's works into French and hosted a **salon**, a regular gathering where eminent thinkers and writers mingled with political and social leaders. Madame Geoffrin (*zhaw-FRAHN*), who used her husband's wealth to help finance Diderot's *Encyclopedia*, also held frequent influential salons. The Marquise du Chatelet (*shah-teh-LĀ*), Voltaire's longtime companion, was a gifted scientist and mathematician who translated Newton's *Principia* and other key works into French. And Madame de Pompadour (*pawm-pah-DOOR*), mistress of France's King Louis XV, was a dominant force in political and diplomatic affairs, a friend of the philosophes, and a generous patron of literature and the arts.

Women play an active role in the Enlightenment

While these eminent French women benefited from ties with influential men and hosted salons attended mostly by males, in England some notable women rejected the patriarchal rules of their male-dominated society. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (*MAHN-tug-yoo*), for example, refused to enter a marriage arranged by her father and promoted the radical notion that women should choose their own husbands. Mary Wollstonecraft, regarded today as a forerunner of modern feminism, was an ardent champion of sexual freedom and women's liberation from male domination. Determined to make her own way in life, she educated herself through extensive reading; then she worked as a governess and teacher before becoming a translator and publisher. In 1792 she published *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, an impassioned and articulate call for equal education of women and men. Her work, and a "Declaration of the Rights of Woman," published in France in 1791 by a writer called Olympe de Gouges (*aw-LAMP duh GOOZH*) (Chapter 26), were early milestones in the modern women's rights movement.

Absolutism and Enlightenment

Enlightened Absolutism develops in Central and Eastern Europe

Although absolutism by the eighteenth century was Europe's main form of governance, the Enlightenment generated an important shift in the attitudes and actions of some rulers. Intelligent monarchs, no longer content to base their authority mainly on religion and tradition, now sought to portray themselves as benefiting their people and to justify their power as a means for bringing enlightenment and reform. These monarchs met and corresponded with philosophes, published their own ideas, and sought to better the lives of their people through progressive reforms. This linking of absolutism with enlightenment, known as Enlightened Absolutism, flourished in Prussia and Austria as well as in Russia (Chapter 25). In England and France, however, where the monarchs lacked the interest and ability to carry out reforms, Enlightened Absolutism never took hold.

Absolutism and Enlightenment in Prussia and Austria

In the early eighteenth century, few European lands seemed less enlightened than Prussia. Its ruler, Frederick William I (1713–1740), was a crude, militaristic drillmaster king who loved his army above all else and had no use for enlightenment. Dressed in uniform rather than royal robes, he was known to patrol the streets of Berlin and beat the lazy and idle with his cane. But his son Frederick, heir to the throne, was a bright, sensitive lad who enjoyed poetry and drama, admired French philosophy, composed music, and even played the flute. These attributes, combined with his homosexual inclinations and indifference to

the army, earned Frederick little but abuse from his father the king. Dismayed by this treatment, at age 18 the prince made plans to flee to England, but he was arrested and forced by his father to watch the beheading of the young man who was his accomplice and lover. The prince henceforth gave in, performed various military duties, and quietly looked forward to inheriting the throne.

Frederick the Great rules by Enlightenment principles

Upon his father's death, King Frederick II (1740–1788), later called Frederick the Great, distinguished himself as an enlightened monarch. A friend of Voltaire and other philosophes, and an intellectual in his own right, Frederick undertook extensive reforms, calling himself the "first servant of the state." To promote justice, he codified the laws and reformed the court system. To advance industry and commerce, he built roads and canals while lowering taxes on goods shipped within Prussia. To improve his people's welfare, he drained swamps, expanded agriculture, built schools, and promoted religious toleration. Reluctant, however, to offend the landed nobles whom he needed to lead his armies, he did not end serfdom, leaving peasants in bondage to their landlords.

Ironically, given his youthful disdain for the army, Frederick also proved an exceptional warrior. In a series of brilliant campaigns, he more than doubled the size and population of his country, earning a reputation as a military genius. He succeeded in establishing Prussia as one of Europe's great powers, mainly by fighting against the Austrian Habsburgs.

Schönbrunn Palace in Vienna, the summer residence of the Habsburgs.

The Habsburgs, meanwhile, were trying to hold together their multinational empire in the absence of a male heir (Map 24.3). Since Maria Theresa, the 23-year-old monarch who inherited the Habsburg lands in 1740, was female, other rulers presumed her to be weak. In December 1740, Prussia's Frederick II boldly invaded the mineral-rich Habsburg province of Silesia; then France and others joined his war against Austria. Since the war was induced by a woman's succession to the Austrian throne, it came to be called the War of the Austrian Succession (1740–1748).

Maria Theresa proved more formidable than her foes had foreseen. In 1741 she took her newborn son (the future Emperor Joseph II) to Hungary and made a dramatic speech, holding him aloft for the Hungarian nobles to see and convincing them to pledge their support to both their beautiful young queen and their future king. Although unable to retake Silesia, she managed to turn back French and Bavarian efforts to create a puppet state in Bohemia.

Once the war ended in 1748, Maria Theresa set out to strengthen her realm. She and her advisers modernized and centralized the bureaucracy, unified the administration of Austria and Bohemia, and compelled their nobles to pay taxes. To better the lot of her subjects, she established an elementary school system and enacted reforms that reduced the nobles' power and improved the welfare of their serfs. Yet as a staunch Catholic who resisted religious toleration, she did not entirely qualify as an enlightened monarch.

Joseph II imposes the Enlightenment on Austria

Her son Joseph, however, fully fit this description. After his mother's death in 1780, Emperor Joseph II, dismayed by the suffering of his subjects, issued a series of radical decrees intended to impose Enlightenment ideals throughout Habsburg lands. In 1781 he abolished serfdom, empowered peasants to buy their own land, and even let them choose their own spouses. Later, despite vehement opposition from the pope, he proclaimed religious toleration and freedom of worship for his subjects. He also instituted freedom of the press, civil rights for Jews, equality before the law, and equality of taxation.

These actions did not always achieve the positive effects that Joseph intended. The nobles agitated against them, destabilizing the realm and confusing the peasants Joseph

Map 24.3 Europe in 1763

By 1763, Europe was clearly a continent in transition. The relentless expansionism of Louis XIV died with him in 1715, and France lost substantial territory overseas during the Seven Years War (1756–1763). Observe that the medieval Holy Roman Empire was becoming obsolete in an era of strong, absolute national monarchies, and was now the subject of a struggle for control between Austria and Prussia. What might this trend toward absolute monarchies mean for a multinational state like the Ottoman Empire?

was trying to help. As rebellions against his reforms broke out in several regions, Joseph grew discouraged. He died disillusioned in 1790, after which his successors rescinded most of his reforms.

Unenlightened Monarchy in England and France

Ironically, neither England nor France—the Enlightenment's two main centers—experienced enlightened or effective monarchy in the eighteenth century. England, with a strong Parliament that could govern in the absence of a capable ruler, nonetheless grew wealthier and stronger. France, with no such institution to make up for a weak ruler, drifted toward bankruptcy and political chaos.

The English monarchy was transformed by several key events in the early eighteenth century. In 1701, twelve years after removing King James II, Parliament passed an Act of Settlement excluding him and his Catholic heirs from the throne. In 1707 an Act of Union formally merged England and Scotland into the Kingdom of Great Britain. In 1714 the death of Queen Anne, the last non-Catholic member of the Stuart family, brought an end to the dynasty.

The British Parliament asserts control of policy

Anne was succeeded by a distant Protestant cousin, the ruler of a small German state called Hanover, who became King George I (1714–1727). As foreigners, he and his son King George II (1727–1760) relied heavily on their British ministers. From 1721 until 1742, the gifted politician Robert Walpole, the main leader of the House of Commons, effectively ran the government. The precedent he set established a crucial position, later called the **prime minister**, in which the same person serves as leader of both Parliament and the royal government, with both legislative and executive authority. The monarch, of course, was still head of state, but that role came to be largely ceremonial. Indeed, when King George III (r. 1760–1820) tried to play an active role in government, he ran into stiff opposition and eventually was labeled a tyrant by many of his subjects in Britain and North America.

France drifts toward bankruptcy

Meanwhile absolutism in France, so dynamic under Louis XIV, deteriorated once he was gone. Having outlived his oldest son and grandson, the Sun King was succeeded in 1715 by his 5-year-old great-grandson, who became King Louis XV (r. 1715–1774). While the new king was still a boy, France was ruled by a regent, who let the nobles regain much of the power they had lost under Louis XIV. Later, when Louis XV came of age, he proved a lazy and weak-willed ruler who made several attempts at reform but withdrew when he met opposition from the nobles. Lavish spending, costly wars, and failure to fix a financial system that exempted the nobles from taxation led the French government increasingly toward bankruptcy, creating the crisis that triggered the French Revolution of 1789.

Chapter Review

Putting It in Perspective

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Western and Central Europe experienced great changes in approaches to government and society. Absolutism triumphed as the preferred form of government, and science and reason came to dominate all forms of intellectual thought.

Absolutism's triumph was based on interactions among monarchs, nobles, and wealthy middle classes. In France, absolutism triumphed because the monarchy, relying on support from the wealthy middle classes, managed to undermine the nobles' power while expanding their prestige. In Austria and Prussia, where there was no strong middle class, absolutism triumphed because the nobles supported it as a way to promote state power; in return, monarchs allowed the nobles to keep their privileges and control the peasants. In England absolutism did not triumph, largely because the nobles and wealthy middle classes, as represented in Parliament, worked to limit the monarchy and force it to share power with Parliament.

The ascendancy of science and reason, meanwhile, was based on the challenges of innovative thinkers to prevailing views about science and society. These thinkers not only described laws that govern the universe but also provided new perspectives on governance, social justice, economics, and gender roles. In the short run, these perspectives prompted some rulers to become enlightened reformers; in the long run, they helped inspire the American and French revolutions of the late eighteenth century as well as the industrial and technological revolutions in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Reviewing Key Material

KEY CONCEPTS

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Louis XV, 603

ASK YOURSELF

1. Why and how did France become an absolute monarchy in the seventeenth century? Why was the French model so attractive to rulers in Central Europe?
2. How did absolutism in Austria and Prussia differ from that in France? How did Central European society differ from that in the West? What impact did these differences have on governance?
3. What personal, political, social, and religious factors contributed to the failure of absolutism and development of limited monarchy in England in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries?
4. What combination of circumstances and insights led to the great scientific advances of the seventeenth century? How and why did these advances contribute to the quest for new perspectives on governance and society?
5. What were the central ideals of the Enlightenment, and how did they relate to governance, society, economics, and gender? How and why did eighteenth century monarchs act as enlightened rulers?

GOING FURTHER

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Key Dates and Developments

Absolutism in France

1610–1643	Reign of King Louis XIII
1624–1642	Cardinal Richelieu as first minister
1643–1715	Reign of King Louis XIV
1643–1648	Ministry of Mazarin
1648–1653	Rebellion of the Fronde
1653–1661	Ministry of Mazarin
1661–1715	Active reign of Louis XIV
1682	Completion of the palace at Versailles
1685	Revocation of the Edict of Nantes
1715–1774	Reign of King Louis XV

Limited Monarchy in England

1603–1625	Reign of James I (first Stuart monarch)
1625–1649	Reign of Charles I
1629–1640	Eleven Years' Tyranny
1642–1647	English Civil War
1649	Execution of Charles I
1649–1658	Rule of Oliver Cromwell
1660–1685	Reign of Charles II
1685–1688	Reign of James II
1688–1689	The Glorious Revolution and Bill of Rights
1689–1702	Reign of William III (and Mary, until 1694)
1701	Act of Settlement
1702–1714	Reign of Queen Anne (last Stuart monarch)
1707	Formation of the Kingdom of Great Britain
1714–1727	Reign of King George I
1721–1742	Governance of Robert Walpole
1727–1760	Reign of King George II

Absolutism in Austria and Prussia

1640–1688	Reign of Frederick William, Great Elector in Brandenburg
1648	Peace of Westphalia (End of Thirty Years War)
1683	Lifting of the Siege of Vienna
1699	Expulsion of Ottoman Turks from Hungary
1701–1740	Reign of King Frederick I in Prussia
1740–1788	Reign of King Frederick II the Great in Prussia
1740–1780	Reign of Maria Theresa in Austria, Hungary, Bohemia
1740–1748	War of the Austrian Succession
1780–1790	Reforms of Joseph II in Austria, Hungary, Bohemia

Europe's Intellectual Revolution

1543	Publication of the Copernican hypothesis
1620	Francis Bacon's *Novum Organum*
1632	Galileo's *Dialogue on the Two Chief World Systems*
1637	Descartes's *Discourse on Method*
1651	Hobbes's *Leviathan*
1687	Newton's *Principia*
1689	Locke's *Two Treatises of Government*
1748	Montesquieu's *The Spirit of Laws*
1751–1772	Diderot's *Encyclopedia*
1751	Lisbon earthquake
1759	Voltaire's *Candide*
1762	Rousseau's *Social Contract*
1776	Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*