

Studies in Renaissance Literature



King James I and the
Religious Culture of England

JAMES DOELMAN

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Volume 4

KING JAMES I AND THE RELIGIOUS CULTURE
OF ENGLAND

Although James I was more interested in religious matters than in any other aspect of English culture at the time, this topic has received little attention in recent literary scholarship, which this book aims to redress. It studies his influence, both direct and indirect, on aspects of religious life, and particularly his hitherto neglected writings. Beginning with an examination of the roots of his religious thinking in the Protestant understanding of biblical monarchy, and his own experiences as king of Scotland, it moves to his reign in England, bringing together literary, religious and political history to consider such subjects as the poetic response to his accession, prophetic poetry at court, and the politics of conversion. Going beyond the usual critical attention to the short devotional lyric, the study draws on such forms as religious narrative, philosophical or theological verse, works of religious satire and controversy, liturgical verse and sermons, by both well and lesser-known writers. James' own attempt to provide a new English versification of the Psalms is examined in particular depth.

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CULTURE OF ENGLAND

James Doelman

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PREFACE

On the morning of 27 March 1625, in the full knowledge that King James I lay dying, Daniel Price preached on the significance of a monarch for the cultural flavour of a nation:

For, as all in Alexanders time, did affect Chivalry, because hee was a Souldier; and Poetry in Augustus time, because hee loved Poets; and Musicke in Nero's time, because hee was a Musitian; and Fencing in Commodus time, because hee delighted in Fencers; so all were forward in Christianity in Constantine's time, because hee loved Christians.¹

Price is comparing James with Constantine, and while contemporaries joked about their king's love of hunting, it was James' religious interests that had the greatest effect on England. This understanding of the cultural influence of a monarch lies behind the present study.² Malcolm Smuts suggests that "The King's tastes and cultural interests need to be studied more carefully, but it seems unlikely that he will emerge as a major trendsetter even in many fields in which he took some interest."³ This book is an attempt to assess the role of James in that aspect of English culture, religion, which most attracted his interest. I suggest that in this area James was a "major trendsetter", or perhaps it is better to say that he was that "North Star" from which the religious culture of the period took its bearings.

During his English reign King James was frequently hailed as the "nutritius" (nursing father) of the church, an image that he himself had

¹ *A Heartie Prayer* (1625), pp. 18–19.

² In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries monarchial change did have a tremendous effect on culture generally and religious life in particular. Each of the later Tudors, of course, serves to illustrate this, as does French history. The reign of Charles I also illustrates it, if we follow Julian Davies in arguing that the marked changes in the English church began already with Charles' accession, and not just the rise to influence of William Laud (Julian Davies, *The Caroline Captivity of the Church*, pp. 24 and 299). For an insightful consideration of James' manifold if often indirect influence on English culture, see Curtis Perry's introduction to *The Making of Jacobean Culture: James I and the Renegotiation of Elizabethan Literary Practice* (Cambridge: CUP, 1997), esp. pp. 6–8. Unfortunately, Perry's work appeared too late to have the influence on the present study that it deserves.

³ "Cultural Diversity and Cultural Change at the Court of James I", *The Mental World of the Jacobean Court*, ed. Linda Levy Peck (Cambridge: CUP, 1991), p. 301n.

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used in *Basilikon Doron* and *The Trew Law of Free Monarchies*.⁴ This striking image, which had its roots in Isaiah 49:23 (“kings shall be thy nursing fathers”), summarizes well the role that James envisioned for himself, not just in reference to the church, but for the religious life of the nation in general. In this book I have set out to consider a number of the ways in which James influenced what I have broadly termed the “religious culture” of England. While James is the starting point for this study, frequently attention comes to rest more firmly on his subjects and their response to his perceived interests and views.

The religious culture of the Jacobean period has been relatively neglected for a number of reasons. James’ accession marked the first since that of Henry VIII where the new reign did not coincide with a manifestly new direction in religion. There was no equivalent to the “Elizabethan settlement” for James; the theology and church government remained largely the same with his accession.⁵ As a result, church historians have given the church of his reign short shrift, even though, unlike Elizabeth, James was vitally interested in a wide range of religious matters.⁶ In recent years this lacuna has begun to be rectified by Nicholas Tyacke and Peter White on the theological developments and disputes of the time, the work of Kenneth Fincham on the Jacobean episcopate, William Patterson on James’ ecumenism, and, most recently, Peter McCullough on the court sermons of the period.⁷ While heavily indebted to these scholars my own work concerns not church history so much as the broader religious culture of the time. I hope, in this book, to do justice to what Julian Davies has called “the remarkable institution that was the Jacobean Church”, an institution that owed more to James than simply its name. However, this study is not primarily one of church history or history of theology; “religious culture” includes, but also extends beyond, the church. James’ influence reached beyond the boundaries of the church proper – to the areas of religious poetry, scholarship, and personal religious commitment – and it is these matters that are the central concern of this

⁴ For further examples of James as “nutritius”, see Richard Eedes, “Princes too bee Nurces of the Church”, in *Six Learned and Godly Sermons* (1604), and John King, *A Sermon at Paules Crosse* (1620), p. 42.

⁵ The beginning of his reign was marked by the Hampton Court Conference (1604), but this assembly largely confirmed the direction of the late Elizabethan church.

⁶ Leo F. Solt, *Church and State in Early Modern England* (Oxford: OUP, 1990), p. 163.

⁷ Nicholas Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists: the Rise of English Arminianism ca.1590–1640* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987); Peter White, *Predestination, Policy and Polemic: Conflict and Consensus in the English Church from the Reformation to the Civil War* (Cambridge and New York: CUP, 1992); Kenneth Fincham, *Prelate as Pastor: the Episcopate of James I* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990); William B. Patterson, *King James VI and I and the Reunion of Christendom* (Cambridge and New York: CUP, 1997); Peter E. McCullough, *Sermons at Court: Politics and Religion in Elizabethan and Jacobean Preaching* (Cambridge and New York: CUP, 1998). See also the seminal article on James and the church, Kenneth Fincham and Peter Lake, “The Ecclesiastical Policy of King James I”, *Journal of British Studies* 24 (1985): 169–207.

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book. The king's influence and role extended into all these areas, and James was willing to countenance a religious culture that lived beyond the church, if never in opposition to that church. It must also be remembered how thoroughly the religious and political spheres overlapped; Kevin Sharpe notes that "James's tracts, speeches, and letters contain constant applications of scripture to issues and problems of state. Scripture for him was a text of state because the Christian and political realms were one and shared a discourse."⁸ This aspect is most pronounced in Chapter 6 where I consider the biblical roots of James' peacemaking stance.

I approach the subject as a literary scholar, and it is the shortcomings in this field that have inspired my work. Literary scholars have most often focussed on short devotional poetry of the period and particularly the holy sonnets of John Donne,⁹ but such literary forms as religious narrative, philosophical or theological verse, liturgical verse, and controversial or satiric writings on religious subjects have been neglected. Sermons, apart from those of Donne and possibly of Lancelot Andrewes, need to be much further considered; both in their oral and printed forms they were the most popular and contentious of cultural forms.¹⁰ It is with these relatively neglected areas that the present study concerns itself.

Religious culture of the Caroline era has received more recent attention than that of the Jacobean; typical is Malcolm Smuts' *Court Culture and the Origins of a Royalist Tradition in Early Stuart England*, which devotes a chapter to religious culture in the reign of Charles, but not one to James on the same subject.¹¹ I would argue that James' religious culture is less accessible for the modern scholar because of James' emphasis on the written word, rather than visual symbolism, and the neo-Latin vehicle of so much of this written culture. Our relative ignorance of neo-Latin writings has cut us off from a good part of the higher culture of the time, and that in which James was most interested.¹² The emphasis on the verbal over the visual was a

⁸ John Morrill *et al.*, eds, *Public Duty and Private Conscience in Seventeenth-Century England: Essays Presented to G. E. Aylmer* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p. 90.

⁹ Such scholarship has been very insightful and helpful; see particularly Barbara K. Lewalski's broad-ranging *Protestant Poetics and the Seventeenth-Century Religious Lyric* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1979).

¹⁰ My very unscientific counting of references in contemporary letters finds that there are approximately twenty references to controversial sermons for every one to a controversial play. See also McCullough, pp. 101 and 125, on the relative significance of sermons and drama.

¹¹ His essay, "The Political Failure of Stuart Cultural Patronage", *Patronage in the Renaissance*, eds Guy F. Lytle and Stephen Orgel (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1981), also gives much more attention to Charles than James.

¹² The preface to *Northerne Poems Congratulating the Kings Majesties entrance to the crown* (1604) (STC 14427) states that "I wrote them [the poems] in Latine for the King, in English for the Queene" (sig. A2r). This suggests that even early in his English reign, it was noted that the better way to address the king was in Latin.

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general trend in Protestantism, especially in the years between 1580 and 1630, but it was heightened by James' personal interests and abilities. Hence, this study as well is primarily concerned with written religious culture.

The religious iconography applied to James during his English reign is also of central concern to this study. Recent scholarship has tended to focus on the iconography of classical figures that were applied to James. Jonathan Goldberg, for example, suggests that while Elizabeth was widely celebrated as a latter-day Deborah, with James "classical allusions dominated".¹³ Such a quantitative statement is difficult to sustain or refute, but Goldberg certainly overlooks the wealth of biblical figures and later Christian emperors and kings to whom James was compared. The distortions in Goldberg's book may be due partly to his emphasis on drama and masque, genres not readily open to biblical or Christian subject matter because of the Blasphemy Act of 1605.¹⁴ In addition, Malcolm Smuts notes that "Our understanding of that history [of James's court] has been coloured, however, by a preoccupation with two major figures – Ben Jonson and Inigo Jones – and by a tendency to interpret developments in James's reign as a prelude to the 'artistic renaissance' that occurred under Charles I."¹⁵ Considerations of the iconography of James must move beyond the limited visual worlds of the theatre, architecture and art, to consider a wide variety of prose and poetry.¹⁶

This book takes James as its starting point, but in doing so I am not suggesting that he was by any means the only significant factor in the development of the Jacobean church or Jacobean religious culture. The English church had been instituted by king and parliament, and the respective roles of church, king, parliament and people were to be disputed throughout the period, and play a large role in the outbreak of the civil war.¹⁷ Patrick Collinson has demonstrated how in late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century England, personal and private commitment to the faith encouraged men to feel that they should play a significant role in shaping how that faith was publicly expressed.¹⁸ Thus, it is the interaction of James' ideas of religious life with that of his subjects that provides the material for this study. For, as James brought certain desires forward, they were met with expectations and models of the clergy and people themselves, expectations derived from scripture and the history of the church, and particularly the Protestant church. Thus an area of negotiation emerged, and frequently this study

¹³ *James I and the Politics of Literature* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1989), p. 33.

¹⁴ Collinson, *Birthpangs of Protestant England* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1988), p. 113.

¹⁵ "Cultural Diversity and Cultural Change at the Court of James I", p. 99.

¹⁶ If Leeds Barroll is correct in arguing that James ultimately cared little for the drama staged in his reign, this adds still further to the argument not to over-emphasize its role in developing a royal iconography ("A New History for Shakespeare and His Time", *SQ* 39 (1988): 441–64).

¹⁷ Davies, *Caroline Captivity*, pp. 313–18.

¹⁸ Patrick Collinson, *The Religion of Protestants: the Church in English Society, 1559–1625* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), pp. 467–99.

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concerns itself with the failure of James to match the expectations of his people, or, to put it another way, the failure of the religious culture to allow itself to be shaped. In considering the relative role of James, my study comes close to that of Curtis Perry, who suggests that while James' "influence on literature and culture was manifold", it was "mediated in practice by a wide variety of local agendas and contingencies".¹⁹

Any study such as this must confront also the difficulty of distinguishing between the views and actions of James himself, and those immediately below him who were responsible for putting his ideas into practice, but who also had ideas and influence of their own. While James' writings circulated much more widely and have survived to a much greater extent than most early modern monarchs', most of the day-to-day influence was through such figures as the archbishop of Canterbury, the secretary of state, and particularly in later years, the duke of Buckingham. In reference to James' writings, D. H. Willson argued that the majority of James' works were in fact largely the work of his "literary assistants"; in response Robert Peters suggested that it might be better to describe these figures as "scholarly research workers", and that at the very least there existed a "Jacobean school of theology".²⁰ While I am broadly in agreement with Peters' view, I would qualify it by noting the tension that frequently existed between James and those bishops with whom he worked most closely, or James and such theologians as Casaubon and du Moulin, and that any "school of theology" or vision of religious culture was in a constant state of change, and responded to both continental and domestic developments. A shared vision of one year might be replaced by unarticulated or open struggle in the next.

James Stuart was king of Scotland, England, Ireland, and recognized by many Britons and other Europeans as the leader of Protestantism. Hence there are three different venues or contexts for James' religious program: Scotland, England and Europe; and at points I will consider James' experiences with the church in Scotland in the years up to 1603, and his desire to play a significant role in the Christianity of all of Europe.²¹ However, this study takes the religious life of England from 1603 to 1625 as its major focus.

The religious culture of Jacobean England is a topic of such breadth that this study is by necessity merely a limited consideration of selected aspects. I have deliberately focussed on those matters, which seem to have "fallen between the stools" of church history and literary study. The book bypasses,

¹⁹ *The Making of Jacobean Culture*, p. 6.

²⁰ Robert Peters, "The Notion of *the Church* in the Writings attributed to Kings James VI and I", *Studies in Church History* 3 (1966): 223; D. H. Willson, "James I's Literary Assistants", *HLQ* 8 (1944-5): 35-57.

²¹ James took greater interest in Irish matters than many in England at the time, but seems to have been content to leave the religious situation there as it was. See Jenny Wormald, "James VI, James I and the Identity of Britain", *The British Problem, c. 1534-1707*, eds B. Bradshaw and J. Morrill (New York: St Martin's Press, 1996), pp. 166-70.

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for example, the best known and most enduring legacy of James' religious interests, that translation of the Bible completed in 1611, which in North America goes by the name of the "King James" version. The role of James in encouraging this work and its success is known even by the non-specialist, and I would have little to add to what has been written by earlier scholars.²² James' reign coincided with an increased interest in church music and the restoration of organs;²³ and such remarkable composers as Tomkins, Byrd, Gibbons and Bull were at work during his reign. While all these were in some way connected with the Chapel Royal during their careers, and thus functioned as part of James' court, there is little indication of his interest in music. However, they certainly also wrote works in his honour, such as "Be Strong and of Courage" by Tomkins²⁴ for his coronation, but such things will remain beyond the scope of this work. Similarly, the liturgical and architectural developments in the royal chapels will only be glanced at occasionally in passing. This is an area that deserves far closer examination than it has received to this point.²⁵

²² A. W. Pollard, *Records of the English Bible 1525–1611* (Oxford: OUP, 1911); David Daiches, *The King James Version of the English Bible* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1941); Olga Opfell, *The King James Bible Translators* (Jefferson and London: McFarland, 1982).

²³ Peter Le Huray, *The Music and Reformation in England, 1549–1660* (New York: OUP, 1967), pp. 45–7.

²⁴ Published in *Musica deo Sacra & Ecclesiae Anglicanae* (1668).

²⁵ Liturgy in James' reign tends to get lost between the Reformational developments of the Elizabethan period and high-church Laudianism under Charles. Peter Le Huray comments in reference to the developments at the Chapel Royal: "As to the King's own views, there are contradictory reports" (p. 47). See McCullough's excellent chapter on the architecture and seating arrangements of the chapels royal (pp. 11–49). Further work needs to be done on the liturgy of these chapels.

Chapter 1

BEGINNINGS: THE ROOTS OF JAMES' ROLE IN RELIGIOUS CULTURE

JAMES Stuart arrived in England in 1603 with a well-developed understanding of the role of a king in the religious life of his kingdom. This understanding had two prime sources: the Protestant understanding of the Bible as it related to kingship, and his experiences as a young king of Scotland. The Scottish reign not only affected James' own view of his role, it also developed expectations among the English, as they looked to the church and court of Scotland for a model of what they themselves might expect in 1603.

In his opening speech to the Hampton Court Conference of 1604, James said "It is no novel device, but according to the example of all Christian princes, for kings to take the first course for the establishing of the church, both in doctrine and policy. To this the very Heathen related in their proverb, *A Jove principium*."¹ This motto sums up well his understanding of the king's role in religious life.² This, however, was only one strand of thought within Christendom: in the fourth century Donatus had rhetorically asked: "What has the Emperor to do with the Church?", and many since had answered, "nothing". British Christians of the early seventeenth century might look to a number of different eras for a model of the relation between a ruler and the religious life of the state: Old Testament Israel, the early church under the Roman emperors, and the customs of the medieval church. A king such as James would find none of these models completely satisfactory: as an heir of the Reformation he would look to biblical and early church patterns, although neither of these fits his high view of the monarch's role. Neither the medieval and counter-Reformation model, with its emphasis on the Donation of Constantine, and the subsequent removal of royal or imperial authority from the religious domain,³ nor the Calvinist model, which in

¹ Qtd. in Fuller, *Church History of Britain* (London, 1868), vol. 4, p. 193. See also Thomas Cogswell, *The Blessed Revolution: English Politics and the Coming of War, 1621–24* (Cambridge: CUP, 1989), p. 311.

² Cogswell, *The Blessed Revolution*, p. 311.

³ While Valla's scholarship on the Donation of Constantine had discredited it in the fifteenth century, the Protestant use of this scholarship led to a reaction in the counter-Reformation, as some within the Catholic church turned once again to the Donation in their defence of papal

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James' view threatened to create a pope in every parish, was satisfactory. Thus, James needed to develop an ideology of royal leadership in religious life that was drawn from a variety of sources, and thus wrestled with the biblical institution of kingship as well as the various paradigms evolving in Protestant nations.

THE BIBLE, PROTESTANTISM AND KINGSHIP

Those Protestants of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries who turned to the Bible, and particularly the Old Testament books that dealt with the era of the kings in Israel and Judah, for a model, found something far short of *jure divino* support for monarchy. The fullest description of the institution of monarchy in Israel is presented in I Samuel 8, where Israel's stubbornness and envy of other nations leads to the anointing of Saul as king. If Israel wanted a king, God would grant them one, but they would also suffer because of this desire:

10 And Samuel told all the words of the Lord unto the people that asked of him a king.

11 And he said, This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you: He will take your sons, and appoint them for himself, for his chariots, and to be his horsemen; and some shall run before his chariots.

12 And he will appoint him captains over thousands, and captains over fifties; and will set them to ear his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and instruments of his chariots.

13 And he will take your daughters to be confectionaries, and to be cooks, and to be bakers.

14 And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your oliveyards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants.

15 And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers, and to his servants.

16 And he will take your menservants, and your maidservants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put them to his work.

17 He will take the tenth of your sheep: and ye shall be his servants.

18 And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the Lord will not hear you in that day. (I Samuel 8:11–18).

That monarchy came to Israel in this fashion was to plague the kings of Christendom for centuries. According to this passage kingship was not looked upon favourably by God as a means of governing his people: it was brought in

power. See Christopher Bush, *Constantine the Great and Christianity* (New York: Columbia, 1914), pp. 203–5.

due to the sheer stubbornness of the people. In demanding a king they were denying God as their king (I Samuel 8:7). Earlier, the people of Israel had offered to make Gideon their king, but he had refused: "I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you: the Lord shall rule over you" (Judges 8:23). In spite of this and other anti-monarchial passages in the Old Testament, kingship in Christendom developed in such a way that monarchy and the church were closely related, especially in the state-churches of the Reformation. Monarchy was no longer seen as incompatible with the worship of God: in extreme cases the King was seen as God's representative or deputy on earth, unassailable and unquestionable in affairs both civil and religious.

James tackled the passage from I Samuel 8 directly in his *True Law of Free Monarchies*, finding in it not a warning against the institution of monarchy, but a prohibition of any later resistance to kingship or an individual king: "And will ye consider the very words of the text in order as they are set down, it shall plainly declare the obedience that the people owe to their king in all respects".⁴ This is followed by an extended commentary on the particulars of Samuel's speech to the people. Frequently, James' later writings on the Oath of Allegiance draw upon this same set of assumptions – that royal authority was instituted by God – and included both the civil and religious realms.

Today's biblical scholars recognize two strands within the Old Testament literature, the monarchial and the anti-monarchial. In opposition to the tradition expressed in the story of Samuel, we find a strong monarchial tradition in much of the Wisdom literature. In the reigns of David and Solomon the worship of Israel's God and divine wisdom become directly associated with the king and court. Reformation proponents of monarchial leadership of religious life drew upon those texts which are now recognized as firmly within the monarchial tradition, and carefully avoided those which presented the throne as being opposed to the will of God. The reigns of David and Solomon were particularly important for developing the idea of a godly king, in whose court the worship of Israel's God is encouraged.

The New Testament added little to the understanding of kingship and the worship of God. While Christ is metaphorically referred to as a king, actual kings do anything but promote the kingdom of God. At the same time, Jesus had said, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's" (Matthew 22:21), without spelling out what belonged to Caesar and what belonged to God; and the apostle Paul had appealed to Caesar for justice when he was persecuted by the high priests in Jerusalem (Acts 24:11).

Through its first three centuries the church was a subcultural movement, frequently persecuted by the Roman emperor. Only with the conversion of Constantine in AD 312 did the emperor/king assume a place of leadership

⁴ *The True Law of Free Monarchies and Basilikon Doron*, eds D. Fischlin and M. Fortier (Toronto: CRRS, 1996), p. 60.

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within the Christian church. From that point, the emperor was the secular head of Christendom, a counterpart to the sacred head of the pope. Through the centuries their roles varied depending on circumstance and the personalities of the figures involved. Until 1530 emperors continued to be crowned by the pope.

Through these centuries the role of the national kings in religious life varied from state to state, and age to age. In some the king held the power of making senior ecclesiastical appointments, and churchmen were ministers of state and councillors – in others his influence was minimal. Throughout all, however, religious life and religious culture continued to be centred in the Catholic church and its officials, especially the pope.⁵ The religious painting, poetry, music and architecture produced was expressed through and in the centres of power within the church. The national court played little role in this area. With the Reformation this was to change drastically: for as princes became the heads of national churches, national religious cultures developed as well. The way in which an English poet expressed the faith might now be significantly different from the way in which it was expressed by an Italian or even a Dutch poet.

In Protestant countries there was no longer a clear separation between the spiritual and secular realms; in all matters the monarch was governor of both clergy and laity, and responsible for both the physical and spiritual needs of his people. Some historians have described the Reformation as largely a rebellion of princes against the central authority of the pope, while others have seen them harnessing and directing an otherwise potentially radical movement. Luther appealed to Frederick, elector of Saxony, for support in 1518, soon after he had begun to openly criticize the church. Later the support of Frederick's son John was to be essential to the success of the movement.⁶ While Frederick passively supported the Reformation, John actively worked to establish a non-Roman church. Henry VIII was proclaimed "supreme head of the church in England" in 1534, a title later rejected by his daughter Elizabeth, who argued that such a title could be applied only to Christ.⁷ Much more so than Henry or James, Elizabeth conceded that some others shared in her governing of the church.⁸

The early Reformers did not set out to establish a monarchical church: while they turned to monarchs for assistance they did not expect that this would

⁵ See Felicity Heal and Rosemary O'Day, eds, "Introduction" in *Church and Society in England: Henry VIII to James I* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon, 1977).

⁶ Euan Cameron, *The European Reformation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), pp. 267–8. See pp. 267–91 for a worthwhile overview of how various princes participated in the furthering of the Reformation.

⁷ The 1559 Act of Supremacy recognized her only as "the supreme governor" of the church. See Claire Cross, "Churchmen and the Royal Supremacy", *Church and Society in England*, eds Felicity Heal and Rosemary O'Day, p. 24.

⁸ Cross, pp. 23–4.

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translate into continued monarchical headship. Claire Cross writes of the English Reformation: "Tyndale and his fellow theologians turned to the godly prince as the agent for the introduction of true religion into England but also assumed that once papal dominion had been renounced the king and kingdom would be ruled by the word of God as interpreted by God's ministers."⁹ The 1550s saw many Protestant exiles from England and Scotland in Geneva, and when they returned in the late 1550s and early 1560s, they brought with them a Calvinism that put great limits on royal authority in matters of faith. They also brought with them the Geneva Bible, the marginalia of which frequently includes negative comments on kingship. For example, beside the passage from I Samuel quoted above there is the following comment: "Not yt Kings have this authoritie by their office, but that suche as reigne in Gods wrath shulde usurpe this over their brethren contrary to the Law". In the Scandinavian countries Reformation came from above, and given James' Scandinavian links this likely had some influence on his own conception of monarch/church relations. James was to present the top-down institution of the Protestant church to be the better way in contrasting Scotland with England. At the same time, states, both Protestant and Catholic, in the sixteenth century came to have a greater internal coherence, a development which increased the authority and influence of the king.¹⁰

In England, the Reformation greatly disturbed the existing cultural scene. The high culture of learning, art and architecture was disrupted by the dissolving of the religious houses in 1539 and the loss of the church as patron. Pre-Reformation provincial culture was largely religious, and such traditional cultural activities as the mystery plays slowly became victims to the times as well.¹¹ The dissolution of the religious houses increased the wealth of the crown and laity, and increased their importance as patrons of art and education. At the same time, emergent Protestantism encouraged active participation by the laity in the shaping of religious life. What developed then was strictly controlled by neither clergy nor monarch.¹² The iconoclasm of Elizabethan Protestantism has often been stressed, but while it certainly eroded one set of cultural forms it built another in their place. Recent studies have gone a long way toward dispelling the notion that Puritanism was simply "anti-culture" generally.¹³ The centrality of the Bible for cultural life became

⁹ Cross, p. 16.

¹⁰ See Geoffrey Elton, *Reformation Europe, 1517–1589* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), p. 298.

¹¹ Imogen Luxton, "The Reformation and Popular Culture", *Church and Society in England: Henry VIII to James I*, eds Felicity Heal and Rosemary O'Day (Hamden, Conn.: Archon, 1977), p. 59.

¹² This avoids the controversy over "slow" or "fast" reformation, and whether from "above" or "below"; my main point is that the Elizabethan settlement created a situation for James where all parts of society might expect to play a role in the shaping of religious life.

¹³ See especially, Patrick Collinson, *Birthpangs of Protestant England*; for more particular studies of drama and Puritanism, see Ritchie D. Kendall, *The Drama of Dissent: The Radical Poetics of*

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pronounced in this period, and the particular culture of psalmody under James I will be examined in Chapter 8. Another significant legacy of the Tudor Protestantism for Jacobean England was the clearer separation between secular and sacred culture that it encouraged.¹⁴

Although James' interest in theology was frequently noted, and he is usually described as a Calvinist, it is fruitless to try to precisely pin down James' theological views in isolation from his political views and his role as king. Any theology or theory of church government which questioned the hierarchy as he understood it would not be tolerated.¹⁵ For James, the political and religious could not be separated. He could be suspicious of *de jure* arguments for both episcopalianism and Presbyterianism, for in both he saw a threat to the king's prerogative. In governing the church the king was to be above faction, to be a "universal king", bringing together the diversity of theological and ecclesiastical opinion in his land.¹⁶ A "universal king" would overcome the self-interests of men to ensure that God was worshipped aright and the unity of the church preserved. Such was the rationale behind James' conducting of the Hampton Court Conference in January 1604, where he listened to the arguments of the bishops and the Puritans from a position of lofty wisdom.¹⁷ James' published writings would seem to offer a perspective on his religious views, but they are limited in that most deal with the question of authority in church and state rather than theology or faith per se, and largely emerged from the particular debate surrounding the Oath of Allegiance.

JAMES IN SCOTLAND

Any discussion of James' influence on English religious life cannot begin with his accession of 1603; for James' understanding of kingship and Christianity took shape through the experience of his Scottish reign.¹⁸ In 1572, when

Nonconformity, 1380–1590 (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1986), Margot Heinemann, *Puritanism and Theatre* (Cambridge: CUP, 1980), and Huston Diehl, *Staging Reform, Reforming the Stage: Protestantism and Popular Theater in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1997).

¹⁴ Collinson, *Birthpangs of Protestant England*, p. 98.

¹⁵ See Johann P. Sommerville, "James I and the Divine Right of Kings: English Politics and Continental Theory", *The Mental World of the Jacobean Court*, ed. Linda Levy Peck (Cambridge: CUP, 1991), pp. 55–70.

¹⁶ Gordon Donaldson, "The Scottish Church, 1567–1625", *The Reign of James VI and I*, ed. Alan G. R. Smith (New York: St Martin's Press, 1973), p. 49. See also Kenneth Fincham and Peter Lake, "The Ecclesiastical Policy of James I", pp. 169–207.

¹⁷ See Mark Curtis, "The Hampton Court Conference and its Aftermath", *History* 46 (1961): 1–16; and Frederick Shriver, "Hampton Court Re-visited: James I and the Puritans", *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 33 (1982): 48–71.

¹⁸ On the connections and continuity between Scottish and English reigns, see Jenny Wormald, "James VI and I: Two Kings or One?", *History* 68 (1983): 187–209. See also the Epilogue to her *Court, Kirk and Community: Scotland 1470–1625* (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1981), pp. 191–4.

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James was six years old, the Oath of Supremacy demanded of all Scottish clergy that they recognize him as the “onlie lawfull and supreme governour of this realme, als weill in things temporall as in the conservatioun and purgatioun of religioun”.¹⁹ However, through the first part of his Scottish reign James' position as king, as well as his place in the religious life of the nation, was problematic; the throne had become his, not through any clear application of divine right and inheritance, but through the struggle that overthrew his mother and placed him on the throne as an infant. If a monarch was instituted only by God, what did that say about James' own hold on the crown while his mother was alive?

The young boy-king slowly grew into an understanding of his role, an understanding based partly on the instruction of his tutors George Buchanan and Peter Young. Buchanan was chosen as chief tutor largely for his Protestantism and antagonism towards Queen Mary. Many in Protestant Europe and Scotland hoped that James would be raised as a “godly prince” (a phrase that will be explored later in this chapter), but Buchanan's instruction was more firmly within the long tradition of the classical and humanist virtuous prince. While Buchanan may have nurtured in James the concept of a virtuous prince and a love of learning, from early on there was evidence of tension between the boy and his tutor, and ultimately the tutor's justification of elective monarchy, and hence tyrannicide, was to turn his pupil/prince violently against him.²⁰ In his English reign, disparagement of Buchanan would continue to be a strategy of choice for those attempting to attract the king's favour.

From an early age, James demonstrated great intelligence, and he was frequently perceived as a sort of scholar-king. In 1603 the Venetian secretary in England referred to James's Scottish reign as “his almost private and studious days in Scotland”.²¹ As a young king James adopted theology as an area of special interest. However, in a nation where the monarch had little central control, and where the church was firmly held by the Presbyterian clergy, there was small scope for using this theological interest to direct religious culture. In Scotland James frequently found himself not directing church policy, but serving merely as a passive pawn for competing factions. In 1582 he was kidnapped from Esmé Stuart by a group of Presbyterians in what came to be known as the Ruthven Raid. After his rescue, a backlash against the Raiders and their clerical supporters set in, culminating in the “Black

¹⁹ *Source Book of Scottish History*, eds W. Croft Dickinson and Gordon Donaldson, 3 vols (London: Nelson [1952–4]), vol. 3, p. 12.

²⁰ Roger A. Mason, “George Buchanan, James VI and the Presbyterians”, *Scots and Britons: Scottish Political Thought and the Union of 1603*, ed. Roger A. Mason (Cambridge: CUP, 1994), pp. 112–37. On the relationship of James and Buchanan, see Caroline Bingham, *The Making of a King: the Early Years of James VI and I* (London: Collins, 1968), pp. 51–5 and 83–91; and I. D. McFarlane, *Buchanan* (London: Duckworth, 1981), pp. 445–50.

²¹ CSPV, 1603–1610, p. 20, 8 May 1603.

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Acts” of 1584, which established the supremacy of the monarch over the church. While in the years 1588 to 1591 James showed an increased willingness to accept Presbyterian ideas and church government, through the 1590s he became increasingly suspicious of participation by the laity in the affairs of the church; his princely role was circumscribed by the desires of the Scottish laity and clergy as expressed in the General Assemblies, which were called by James. The 1596 General Assembly was notorious for its direct criticism of the royal family and court.²²

It was during these years of conflict and change that James began to articulate publicly his own conception of the kingly role in relation to the faith of the nation. In his earliest religious writings, *A Meditation upon the xxv, xxvi, xxvii, xxviii and xxix verses of the XV Chapter of the first Booke of the Chronicles of the Kings* (1589), and *Ane Fruitfull Meditation* (1588), he plays the role of the learned, godly prince patiently explaining scripture to his people. In both he follows a relatively militant Protestant line, portraying Scotland as the beleaguered church beset by enemies, most notably the Spanish, yet ever protected by God. Like King David dancing before the Ark of the Covenant, the godly prince is to lead the people in praising God for his many blessings. He is to be assisted by the various estates:

a godly king findes, as his heart wisheth, godly estates concurring with him.
Next, a godly king of his godly foresight in choosing good under-rulers, reapeth
this profit and pleasure that as he goeth before, so they with zealous hearts doe
follow.²³

By the 1590s James was establishing more personal control, but still found himself threatened by the Catholic earls on the one side, and the intransigent Presbyterianism of Andrew Melville and his supporters on the other. Both threatened to place a clerical or ecclesiastical power over that of the monarch. The difference lay in that the Presbyterians could recognize the possibility of a godly prince leading the nation, and while they quarreled with James over such matters as liturgy and church government, they did not question his personal right to be the king of Scotland. A Presbyterian system that recognized him as the godly prince, rather than “God’s sillie vassal” or “bot a member” of Christ’s Church as Melville on different occasions called him, might be acceptable.²⁴ It was his actual experiences of the Presbyterian system in Scotland that led to his famous statement “No bishop, no king” and his later embracing of episcopacy in England. Realizing that such remnants of the Presbyterian system as the assemblies could not immediately be disposed of, James used and manipulated them to achieve his own vision of the church. With the 1601 Assembly he introduced his ideas of a revised Book of

²² Wormald, *Court, Kirk and Community*, p. 127.

²³ *A Meditation upon . . . the XV Chapter of the first Booke of the Chronicles of the Kings*, in *Workes* (1616; Fasc. Rpt., New York: George Olms Verlag, 1971), p. 84.

²⁴ The latter quotation is cited in Wormald, *Court, Kirk, and Community*, p. 148.