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Court, Clients and Kingship: A Study of Royal Executive Style During the Reign of James I

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COURT, CLIENTS AND KINGSHIP: A STUDY OF ROYAL EXECUTIVE STYLE DURING THE REIGN OF JAMES I

by

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B.A. February 1994, Concordia College, St. Paul

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of Old Dominion University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for the Degree of

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ABSTRACT

COURT, CLIENTS AND KINGSHIP: A STUDY OF ROYAL EXECUTIVE STYLE DURING THE REIGN OF JAMES I

Nick Jon Ziegler
Old Dominion University, 2001
Director: Dr. S. A. Finley-Croswhite

The thesis explores James Stuart’s distinct style of kingship as a self-proclaimed absolute monarch whose writings, speeches and public image belied his intention to rule moderately for the welfare of his subjects. The king’s reign is analyzed with regard to his ideas on monarchy and government, ecclesiastical policies, problems with clientage, relations with favourites and court culture. Both in Scotland and England, James’ writings reveal his static approach to governing key institutions of church and state. The Jacobean court served as the locus of state political power as well as royal patronage, thus drawing many suitors for public offices and the king’s favour. Life at court was also characterized by artistic vitality, motivated in part by the king’s desire to cultivate a magnanimous image for the crown. By examining James’ political writings, private letters, published proceedings of Parliament, various political tracts, contemporary histories and secondary source literature the king’s style and practice of kingship, or his “Kingcraft,” is revealed.
In memory of my father, John Gabriel Ziegler (1936-1999), and to my wonderful family whose love and support has meant so much to me in my time away from home.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the members of my committee for their assistance with this thesis. Professor Annette Finley-Croswhite's help was essential to me in developing this thesis as well as other projects during the course of my studies. She extended to me the intellectual freedom to pursue my interests, offered valuable guidance on my research, and continually encouraged me in my efforts. Professor Douglas Greene provided helpful advice on source material as well as advice regarding the origin of Jacobean political theory. I would also like to thank Professor Kathy Pearson for agreeing to be the third member of the committee. Her suggestions for chapter five proved very useful for analyzing the period's popular culture.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. INTRODUCTION: JAMES I REVISITED</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. THE KING REIGNS SUPREME</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. KING AND GOVERNOR</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. CLIENTAGE AT THE JACOBEAN COURT</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. COURT SPECTACLE AND PUBLIC PERCEPTION</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. CONCLUSION</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHRONOLOGY</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDICES</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VITA</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION: JAMES I REVISITED

James Stuart’s life as a king began with John Knox’s 1567 sermon on the coronation of King Joash, the grandson of wicked Queen Athalia. Knox’s sermon text, an obvious allusion to Mary de Guise’s forced abdication six months earlier, represented the recent Protestant victory in Scotland as well as the fervent hope that the child-king would grow to become a champion for the Calvinist cause. Knox would not be the last to liken James to biblical monarchs. Periodically throughout his life the king referenced Solomon to fashion his image as a judicious ruler of Godly people. Even James’ eulogy, delivered by archbishop Williams at Westminster Abbey, was an eloquent comparison of “the two Solomons” — whose life, actions and writings displayed their God-given wisdom.¹

Of course the description of a king given during his funeral sermon is not necessarily the version adopted by historians. Portrayals by contemporaries and historians of King James I of England similarly used metaphors or similes to characterize his reign, but they did so with considerably

¹Lucy Aikin, Memoirs of the Court of King James the First, vol. 2 (London: Printed for Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1822), 405.
less flattery. Indeed, until recently historians have had a rather negative opinion of James.

James acceded to the English throne on March 24, 1603, a prepared, experienced monarch. He was also uncommon among early modern monarchs in that he did more than rule as a king - he wrote and published several political treatises on the subject. Thus with James, historians have a unique opportunity to study a monarch not only as ruler, but also as theorist on the art of kingship. This thesis describes James Stuart's distinct style of kingship as a self-proclaimed absolute monarch by divine right whose writings, speeches and public image belied his intention to rule moderately for the welfare of his subjects. From birth James was trained to rule. He loved debate, scholarly pursuits and enjoyed delivering long-winded speeches to his Parliament. In this sense he epitomized the Renaissance equivalent of a philosopher king, who ruled for the benefit of his kingdom.

The possibility of James being remembered as a philosopher king was undone early on by the portraiture Sir Anthony Weldon, a minor Jacobean court official, produced in his libel The Court and Character of King James.² Weldon

²In 1617, Weldon accompanied James on a tour of Scotland. Apparently Weldon found the country to be a backward and unsightly land, with a rebellious nobility. He wrote a letter to this effect to a friend which unfortunately for him found its way to the king. Sir Anthony Weldon, The Court and Character of King James (London: Printed for J. Collins, 1651).
depicted James as an ill-mannered, well-educated Scot who "was very cunning in petty things," but "a foole in weighty affaires." As such, this rejected courtier quoted a "wise man" - possibly Maximilien de Béthune, the duke of Sully - who had dubbed James "the wisest foole in Christendome."3

Unfortunately for James, Weldon's biased text was discovered by a popular novelist. In 1822, Sir Walter Scott borrowed directly from Weldon and popularized the image of James as an erudite fool in *The Fortunes of Nigel*:

He was deeply learned, without possessing useful knowledge; sagacious in many individual cases, without having real wisdom; fond of his power, and desirous to maintain it, yet willing to resign the direction of that and of himself, to the most unworthy favourites.4

Weldon and Scott's characterization of James became a standard feature for historians and continued influencing early Stuart scholarship well into the twentieth century. Although James openly and successfully pursued policies that afforded his kingdoms peace and political stability, for over three centuries James was portrayed as an extravagant, would-be autocrat who was too busy hunting, cavorting with male favourites and attending court sermons to rule his kingdoms properly.

Late nineteenth-century Whig historians, such as Samuel R. Gardiner, perpetuated this interpretation of James, but

3Ibid., 172-173.

placed it in the context of a growing power struggle between the crown and Parliament. Gardiner argued that Jacobean politics spawned conflicts that led to civil war under Charles I. James’ fiscal difficulties begat Charles’ conflict with Parliament over impositions; James allowed religious discord to expand to the intolerance of Charles’ reign; and most importantly, James’ absolutist assertions set a precedent for Charles’ blatant disregard for Parliamentary rights.

At first glance Gardiner’s conclusion that civil war conflicts began under James seems logical, but every society has conflict, and the issues of one generation do not necessarily intensify with the next generation. Unlike this picture of the king contributing to a growing power struggle, the ultimate goal of his political theory was social harmony. The second chapter of this thesis argues that James’ conception of absolute monarchy did not imply kings had completely unlimited power; rather he used the term to define the relationship between king and subjects.

Certainly many early Stuart historians consider absolutism a meaningful term for analysis, at least regarding the political thought of Jacobean England. Traditional assessments of James’ theory on absolutism render his ideas unoriginal, arrogantly presumptive, barely
coherent and claiming illimitable authority for monarchs. Current researchers are less critical of the quality of James' speeches and writings, but they continue to discuss the scope of the powers the king claimed for himself. Several important contributions in this area are J. P. Sommerville's *Royalists and Patriots* and Glenn Burgess' *Absolute Monarchy and the Stuart Constitution*. Sommerville claims that absolutists, of whom James was one, did not believe kings to be unlimited because they were subject to divine law. As a result, a monarch's limitation in this way did not detract from their absolute nature regarding temporal authority. Burgess also rejects the argument that monarchs were not absolutists if they were limited, and decries the assumption by historians that the concept of resistance was synonymous with limitation in seventeenth-century England. He contends that monarchs could be self-limited, bound by their coronation oath or even common law. Yet he believes absolutism was a political ideology not widely held during James' reign, and the king himself does not deserve to be labeled an absolutist, since his writings

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5"King James I...used language that means, if it means anything, that he claimed for the King, as such, an inherent absolutism of power that could not be limited." J. W. Allen, *English Political Thought, 1603-1644* (New York: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1967), 4.

were primarily intended to deter resistance theories.7

Important to any discussion of early Stuart absolutism is an understanding of how the term "absolute" was used during this period. James Daly effectively demonstrates that before the Civil War absolute had a fluid meaning, which allowed for limitation in some areas but remained absolute in others. It became synonymous with arbitrary or unlimited power only after the war.8 This section also explores some of the influences that helped shape James’ political ideas.

The third chapter of this thesis addresses James’ rulership, or the practical side of his approach to governing. The king’s relationship with the Church of England as well as Parliament was marked by his attempt to moderate factional squabbles within the church and a general difficulty with the House of Commons. Although James did not accept ideas that suggested his authority could be superceded in either politics or religion, his guiding principle in dealing with both secular and ecclesiastical institutions was moderation.

The king demonstrated his commitment to the via media early in his reign. After the Elizabethan church settlement

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(1559) established the basic doctrines and political structure of the Church of England, Puritan expectations arose that with the coming of a new king a new compromise might be possible. Puritan efforts to produce a new settlement culminated in the Hampton Court Conference of 1604, which led to some minor reforms but essentially maintained the characteristics of the Elizabethan church. The importance of this conference is stressed in this chapter because it was the sole event where James met with and listened to both the representatives of the Puritan clergy and the bishops.

Although most historians currently credit James for pursuing the "middle way" between the extremes of radical Puritans and arch-conservative prelates, some still fault the king for failing to permanently resolve this conflict. In Kenneth Fincham’s and Peter Lake’s influential essay, "The Ecclesiastical Policy of King James I," the authors place the blame for Charles’ “palace revolution” squarely with James. They contend that the king ignored clear signals of growing discontent among prelates regarding his “policy of incorporation and leniency” with moderate Puritans. This tolerance of “cloaked doctrinal heterodoxy was merely a Trojan horse” that, under Charles, forced a reaction by Arminians to capture control of the central
apparatus of the church. Lori Anne Ferrel's 1998 study of Jacobean court sermons finds that James exacerbated religious tensions by encouraging a "campaign by polemic" against Puritans. Ferrel's work is an overt attempt to revive James' role in developing the cultural origins of the English Civil War. As such, it assumes the traditional view that James' ideas and policies were somehow linked to disastrous decisions made by his son Charles. This section questions such linkage, and contends that James' commitment to the via media and relative tolerance maintained ecclesiastical unity.

The traditional interpretation of early Stuart politics depicted an ever escalating power struggle between the crown and the House of Commons, and according to this view James' inept leadership is faulted for provoking the conflict. Wallace Notestein's early twentieth-century work, The Winning of the Initiative by the House of Commons, exemplified this perspective:

During the years between 1603 and 1621 many things served indirectly to force a new leadership. James did much to put his Government on the defensive, much that tended to create an offensive upon the part of those who had complaints to make.11

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Since the mid 1970's historians have challenged this view by pointing out several faulty assumptions by Notestein and others. Conrad Russell and Kevin Sharpe stand out among this group of revisionists by emphasizing that both crown and Parliament respected a political system that embraced consensus while eschewing faction and partisanship. In short, this rivalry for political supremacy that Notestein claimed had escalated during James' reign never took place, according to Russell and Sharp. Sharp claims that he and other revisionists have effectively debunked the traditional rendition of early Stuart Parliamentary history, "but offer no new picture in its place." Currently no single new synthesis has been recognized by historians. Instead, various interrelated studies analyzing single issues and events concerning Parliament have been published, but these works generally do not examine the scope and intensity of conflict within the broader context of early Stuart politics.

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13 Sharpe, *Politics and Ideas*, 75.

According to James, the House of Commons was noisy, disorderly, contentious and exceedingly slow in its proceedings. For their part, Parliamentarians seemed overly quick in petitioning grievances, yet slow in taking up the king's legislative agenda. Indeed conflict did exist between the crown and the Commons, but that conflict did not induce a level of instability that suggests a constitutional crisis. Despite his low opinion of Parliament and absolutist views, the king never overstepped his Common Law limitations, and he repeatedly spoke of his obligation to maintain his oath in this respect.

Another important and distinctive aspect of James' kingship was his close relationship with the men who surrounded him at court and served him in public office. Chapter four analyzes the role of patronage in administering the kingdom, and discusses some of the prominent personalities at court and in the government. Since James tended to delegate the day to day direction of government, Parliamentary negotiations and the patronage system itself, he greatly relied upon his advisors, officers of the court and favourites to manage his affairs. Historians often suggest that James ruled as an absentee monarch, leaving virtually all of his duties to an appointed surrogate while he enjoyed traveling about rural England.  

country excursions strained communications with his ministers, he did not ignore his responsibilities of governing. The end of this section also examines the dysfunctions of Jacobean patronage that led to a rash of prosecutions of high-ranking officials.

In order to effectively rule, James needed both councillors with expertise and support from the nobility. The first half of James' reign in England witnessed cooperation between Robert Cecil, Elizabeth's secretary, and the powerful Howard family in managing both the government's administration and royal patronage. Although he employed people from diverse backgrounds, James' governments developed a characteristic of narrow channels for decision-making and patronage distribution. This characteristic remained a feature of the Jacobean political system, as it allowed the king to avoid suitors and deflect criticism of controversial policies.

The ascendance at court of George Villiers, the Duke of Buckingham, meant that royal patronage would again be funneled through the favourite's office. Buckingham's reputation both inside and outside the court was that he epitomized the corrupting influence brought to Whitehall by many of the individuals James favored. Roger Lockyer declares that the duke "was without a doubt the most unpopular man in England" at the time of his
assassination. Although jealous courtiers, rejected suitors, Puritans, or even common English folk had many reasons for objecting to the duke's level of influence with the king, none of these reasons caused as much anger as the issue of corruption. Of course Buckingham was not the only member of the government to be accused of this offense, but as the most notorious transgressor his unpopularity only increased after he escaped impeachment. Former clients of Buckingham, notably Chancellor Bacon and Lord Treasurer Middlesex, were convicted for bribery and extorting illicit fees. Convictions of high-level officials lent credibility to the notion that royal/public funds were being improperly collected and diverted into private hands. After these "successes" Parliament was more willing to investigate corruption allegations.

The controversies surrounding Buckingham's management of patronage, recurrent allegations of corruption, and Parliament's impeachment campaign towards the end of James' reign has drawn the interest of several historians. In Joel Hurstfield's Freedom, Corruption and Government in Elizabethan England political corruption is generally defined as subversion of the public good to benefit private

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Hurstfield argues that outdated institutions, fiscal doctrines, and under-funded payrolls necessitated some of the practices, which currently we group together under the broad term of "corruption." According to Hurstfield, neither the specific practices nor the amount of money received by the accused were the reason for Parliament's campaign against corruption. Rather, the perception that government officials were peddling influence and favourtism to the highest bidder provoked the public's outrage.

Linda Levy Peck agrees with, and expands on, Hurstfield's assessment that structural defects in the Jacobean patronage system caused political corruption. However, she also draws attention to how "corruption became a political issue capable of helping to undermine governmental legitimacy." Peck's research in this area represents the only thorough examination of the Jacobean patronage system and the related problems of corruption.

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This thesis accepts Peck's conclusions as a basis for further analysis relating to James' style of kingship.

Just as court drew the most ambitious courtiers and politicians from James' kingdoms, it also claimed some of Europe's finest artistic talent. James' lack of decorum during some of the lavish galas traditionally has been portrayed as detracting from the cultural vitality that helped define the period. But chapter five reveals a king who took a personal interest in promoting his vision for a prosperous, peaceful, united country through art forms that borrowed from continental baroque culture. The public's view of James and his court included more than his ideals and artistic choices. Negative depictions of courtiers and court life in popular media reveal the public's cynicism regarding affairs at Whitehall, but these images did not render James a bad king.

Ben Jonson, Inigo Jones, Thomas Middleton, and William Shakespeare were some of the most important and influential artists and writers of the period. Accordingly this chapter explores their work, and that of other less-known writers, in order to gain some insight into public opinion concerning the king and his court. Considerable space is given to studying the masques of Jonson and Jones because their performances served as the premier court entertainment of the age; and, more than any other art, masques vividly demonstrated the king's ideal vision for his kingdoms.
Since James cultivated an open atmosphere, with many visitors coming and going at Whitehall, gossip of life at court spread easily. The public's fascination with the court is born out by the number of plays set in royal households, mimicking masquerade balls, or even using recent events involving their king.

Although there is a wealth of literature on Jacobean court culture, most early works confuse artistic developments of this period with those of the Caroline styles. Before Malcolm Smuts' research on Jacobean court culture and its relevance to royal values, historians ignored the diversity of artistic styles in this period. The works of Stephen Orgel and Paul Sellin effectively demonstrate how court masques both articulated the king's basic political ideals as well as the crown's position on a variety of contemporary issues.

Since the 1960's, James' stock has risen with historians of the early Stuart period. Along with debunking the "high-road to civil war" theory, revisionists have reconsidered his reign with moderately positive remarks. The renewal of James' historical reputation began with an initial emphasis on court culture. G. P. V. Akrigg's Jacobean Pageant shows life at court with all its artistic

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vitality, dark intrigues, diverse personalities and numerous favourites. In this work, James is depicted as “a man with many faults, enough psychological oddities to engage a corps of psychiatrists, and a surprising range of virtues.”21 Among these virtues was the king’s reputation as a just and peaceable ruler, who managed to suppress the internal religious strife that began brewing under Elizabeth and who kept England out of the disastrous war on the continent. Caroline Bingham’s 1981 work echoes this characterization of James, as he remained well liked by his subjects as “a generally respected, if not popular king,” throughout most of his reign.22 Bingham’s work also reveals the connection between James’ theoretical texts, written in Scotland, and his aspirations for Stuart rule in England. Success as king in his native land provided a context for his approach in managing kingdoms, especially that which he most coveted—England. Other prominent works have followed that favorably assess James’ reign.23 Given the wealth of positive press James has received lately, it is unlikely that his legacy

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21G. P. V. Akrigg, Jacobean Pageant or the Court of King James I (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962), 396.


23Other examples of studies that reflect positively on James are: Maurice Lee Jr., Great Britain’s Solomon: James VI and I in His Three Kingdoms (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990); Roger Lockyer, James VI & I (Singapore: Addison Wesley Longman Ltd., 1998).
requires another "rescuer." Although this thesis generally reflects positively on the king, it also acknowledges his political weaknesses and explores some of the negative popular depictions of his court.

As successor to Queen Elizabeth James had a difficult act to follow upon the throne, but the initial mood of the country seemed to be that people were ready for new leadership. Although James' accession brought changes to the crown, his approach to rule did not alter. In theory and practice Jacobean absolutism was an attempt to define a monarch's relationship with his subjects, not a refined political theory. The new king retained some policies from Elizabeth's reign while transforming other aspects of the English monarchy. In a profound sense, the king's new status was the fulfillment of a long hoped-for ideal; the completion of a goal rather than the beginning. Becoming King of England did not make James a new king in a different country, instead he was an old king elevated to a grander kingdom. At bottom a monarch should be judged on the successes and failures of their reign. The first Stuart king knew both experiences, but none of his errors led to disasters for his kingdoms. With his kingdoms dynastically united and the country enjoying two decades of peace, James probably felt his theory of kingship had been vindicated at the time of his death on March 27, 1625.
CHAPTER II
THE KING REIGNS SUPREME

It is a peculiar paradox that historians of Scotland tend to write favorably of James, as historians of England are frequently critical of his reign. Despite differences in size and complexity between the kingdoms of Scotland and England, James' approach to his monarchical role and duties in both realms was remarkably similar. The king's faith in his universal approach to kingship was expressed in the dedication to son Charles in the Meditation upon...St. Matthew; in which he reaffirms the value of his experience and "advice anent the government of Scotland" for practice in England.\footnote{King James I, A Meditation Vpon...Saint Matthew..., in King James VI and I, Political Writings, ed. Johann P. Sommerville (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 230.} James' reign in Scotland provided him with political proficiency and a code for kingly behavior that he later applied in England. Of course his comprehension regarding matters of state grew slowly during childhood, but the young king's experiences may have helped establish some of his beliefs concerning religion and the nature of monarchy.

Since James began reigning in his minority, and in a sense orphaned, his earliest influences came from those appointed as his regents and tutors. Sadly for the young
king and his surrogates, the men chosen to serve in the former office rarely lived more than two years beyond their appointments. In fact the first three regents: the earls of Moray, Lennox and Mar had all died by James' sixth year. These transitions from one regent family to another must have been difficult for a young child who never really knew his mother or father. He appears to have developed a bond with the Countess of Mar, Annabel Erskine, whom he affectionately called "Lady Minny." However, James lived with the Erskine family for only one year before the earl's passing, and his years with the Earl of Morton, the last regent, were more focused on the king's education.

In 1570, when James was not yet four years old, two tutors were appointed to educate the young king. They were George Buchanan, an aged scholar of international renown; and Peter Young, a younger scholar recently returned from Geneva where he had studied under Theodore Beza. James benefitted by growing up in an era when the education of a Christian prince was not only expected, but had an Erasmian program to direct readings. The regimen was demanding for

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2King James I to Annabel Erskine, mid 1570's, in G. P. V. Akrigg, ed., Letters of King James VI & I (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 41.

3Erasmus' Institutio principis Christiani, written for Charles V and sent to Henry VIII, advocated a typical Renaissance curriculum with a strict emphasis on moral edification to the exclusion of all poetry and comedic plays. James' program was less restricted, since he read Horace, Virgil and Terence. See M. L. Clarke, "The Education of a Prince in the Sixteenth Century: Edward VI and James VI and I," History of Education 7, no. 1(1978): 7-19.
a young child, yet James showed ability and attentiveness.

Young described the rigorous schedule:

After morning prayers, his attention was devoted to the Greek authors, and he read a portion of the New Testament, and was exercised in the grammar rules. After breakfast he read Cicero, Livy, Justin...in the afternoon...composition, arithmetic or cosmography, which included geography,...logic or rhetoric.4

Young apparently spent more time than Buchanan instructing James, and with an eye to the future he avoided offending his pupil. However, the curmudgeonly Buchanan did not concern himself with keeping the king’s favour, thus when he believed circumstances required it, he employed corporal punishment. On one occasion, the Countess of Mar confronted the tutor for assaulting “the Lord’s Anointed” with such severity. He replied, “Madam, I have whipped his arse; you may kiss it if you please.”5 Although Buchanan died in James’ seventeenth year, fear of the austere tutor’s wrath haunted him the rest of his life.6 Both men were enduring influences on the king. Young, ever the courtier, continued to assist James in various capacities from serving as his marriage ambassador in Denmark to appointment as tutor and “chief overseer” of Prince Charles. Young prospered as a

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4Quoted in Willson, *King James VI and I*, 23.


6According to Francis Osborne, the king “used to say of a person in high place about him, that he ever trembled at his approach, it reminded him so of his pedagogue.” Quoted in Lockyer, *James VI & I*, 9.
result of continued favour at court and lived long enough to witness the burial of his patron.

Buchanan was not content to educate his student in the classics, he resolved to indoctrinate James in political contract theory. As a proponent of Calvinism he supported the protestant coupe to depose James' mother, Mary Queen of Scots, whom he considered a murderous "whore" that employed French bodyguards by which "the Foundation of Tyranny seem'd to be laid." The queen's forced abdication prompted Buchanan to publish several works, which argued for limited monarchy by popular consent while justifying the resistance and tyrannicide of wicked monarchs. In his *History of Scotland* he claimed, "Kingly Government is nothing else but a mutual Stipulation between King and People," a relationship which was "ingraven in Men's hearts...[and] remains inviolable and eternal." Buchanan's radical political philosophy wrested sovereignty from monarchs, gave it to the people and declared the king subject to the law. This model was based on a natural law argument which used accounts of mythical kings to establish precedents. Strikingly secular and humanistic in composition, Buchanan's philosophy differed from that of his Scottish presbyterian contemporary John Knox, because it lacked a religious

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8 Ibid., 423.
polemic.

Although James appreciated his tutor's skills as scholar and poet, he clearly opposed both Buchanan's political philosophy and depiction of his mother Mary. Buchanan's dedications to James in *The History of Scotland* and *De Jure Regni* seems ironic in hindsight, since the king secured condemnation of both books by the Scottish Parliament in 1584, less than two years after the former's death. Years later he warned his son Henry about "such infamous invectives, as Buchanans or Knoxes Chronicles: and if any of these infamous libels remain vntill your dayes, vse the Law vpon the keepers thereof."\(^9\) Furthermore, although the king's *Trew Law of Free Monarchies* (1589) avoids mentioning either Buchanan or Knox, it is an implicit refutation "against their Sirene songs."\(^10\) Roger Mason suggests that despite James' rebellion against Buchanan's political ideas, "he may have learned more from his tutor than he was prepared to admit."\(^11\) Mason's assertion centers on both men's profound opposition to monarchical rule by


force and fear, and emphasis upon kingly sensitivity to the welfare of subjects. Although these beliefs may be common to both men, they were resolved through very different political models. Furthermore, the origin of James’ fear of violence and coercion owed nothing to monarchical tyranny, but everything to the very rebellions advocated by Buchanan.

As king of Scotland, James periodically witnessed bloody assaults on the royal household by various factions of the Scottish nobility. These attacks began while James was still in the womb with the murder of Queen Mary’s secretary and alleged lover David Rizzio in 1566, an act that set a precedent for attempts to control the monarchy through brute force. A year and a half after the earl of Moray’s assassination in 1570, five-year-old James watched as his grandfather, the earl of Lennox, was carried mortally wounded into Stirling Castle. Of James’ regents, only the earl of Mar died of natural causes, and the king himself consented to the controversial execution of the earl of Morton. Any monarch who reigned in his minority endured some instability, but James’ situation in Scotland was remarkable for its feudal bickering amongst the nobility and religious factionalism which so frequently led to violence in Edinborough. In such an atmosphere, the young king became a valuable pawn for whichever of these groups held his person. Maurice Lee characterizes James’ position during his early years in Scotland as “not a king, but a boy
with a crown on his head." The Ruthven Raid in 1582 marks the final incident when use of direct, physical coercion successfully secured James as an instrument to be used by some faction of the nobility. It began as a hunting trip in the vicinity of Ruthven Castle, where the king was lured inside only to find himself taken prisoner by the earl of Gowrie, William Ruthven, the Master of Glamis and other protestant lords. Their demands were: expulsion of James’ cousin and favourite Esmé Stuart and imprisonment of James Stewart, Earl of Arran. The Gowrie conspirators, with the support of the Scottish kirk, held James captive for nearly a year at Ruthven; however, after James and Arran’s liberation they seized and executed Gowrie in 1584. Several years later, James decided to sail for Oslo so that he might accompany his new bride, Anne of Denmark, on her trip to Scotland. In a letter explaining that voyage to his subjects he described the circumstances of his earlier years:

I was alone, without father or mother, brother or sister, king of this realm and heir apparent of England. This my nakedness made me to be weak and my enemies stark. One man was as no man, and the want of hope of succession bred disdain. Yea, my long delay bred in the breasts of many a great jealousy of my inability, as if I were a barren stock.13

12Lee, Great Britain’s Solomon, 47.
13Letter to the People of Scotland, 22 October 1589, in Akrigg, Letters, 98.
After his marriage to Anne and the birth of Prince Henry, events at the royal household allayed fears that James would be a "barren stock," and more importantly, violence ceased to be a viable means to control crown policy. But his "naturally timorous disposition" and fear that his position could still be challenged by unforeseen plots became well-known aspects of his character.14

In order to stabilize his government, prevent religious strife and save his own head, James realized the necessity of consolidating political power. As an intellectual who "loved not the fight of a soldier," the king sought to create order by the power of his pen.15 The Trew Law of Free Monarchies was the king's first attempt to articulate formally his views regarding the "mutual dutie betwixt a Free King and His Subjects."16 Theoretical rather than practical, The Trew Law advanced absolute monarchy by divine right, and broadly defined the roles played by monarch and subjects within this political model. According to James, by natural and divine law a "King becomes a naturall Father to all his Lieges at his Coronation."17 As father, the king must provide his child-subjects with prosperity and peace,

14Weldon, 164.
15Weldon, 168.
16King James I, The Trew Law, in Political Writings, Sommerville, 62.
17Ibid., 65.
while the people owe respect and obedience. In keeping with this family metaphor, the king is not responsible to his subjects or any "politic body" they compose. Furthermore, by stating that Scottish monarchs were lords of their entire dominion, James claimed that all lands and titles of his subjects had been held as a privilege in exchange for their loyalty and service to the crown. The king's power to grant such titles and govern these holdings remained independent of Parliament and the judiciary.

James directly took aim at the contract theories proposed in Buchanan's History, which had been popularized in France and Scotland many years earlier by Buchanan's mentor John Mair. Contract theorists generally held that a compact between monarch and subjects existed since ancient times. Its origin was uncertain, but remnants of this compact remained in the form of statutes and especially the coronation oath. Contract doctrines asserted rights of subjects, limited monarchical power by constitutional law, and sometimes claimed sovereign power was conferred by the people in the contract. This philosophical debate concerning sovereignty was ongoing in 1598 when James

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18Ibid., 68.

19Ibid., 73.

20The oath was particularly important, as it renewed the age-old contract for individual monarchs. See Sommerville, Royalists and Patriots, 62-63.
published his text, and the king's opposition to contract theory was unmistakable:

As to this contract alledged made at the coronation of a King, although I deny any such contract bee made then, especially containing such a clause irritant as they alledge; yet I confesse, that a king at his coronation, ...willingly promiseth to his people, to discharge honorably and trewly the office given him by God over them;...Now in this contract, God is doubtless the only Judge...of the breakers.\(^{21}\)

In short there was no contract, but if there were a contract the only valid judgement concerning its breach would come from God. The presumption that any subject could claim their monarch had broken the contract offended James' idea of political order. How can a family be healthy if the children are allowed to show disrespect to their father by holding him to an agreement? Furthermore, any such brokered deal between two parties suggested a relative equality of these same parties, an intolerable concept for a king who considered himself "resembling the Divinitie." Implicit in James' rationale here is a warning to his subjects: it is not your place to challenge "God's vice-regent."\(^{22}\)

Using the examples of Nero and Nebuchadnezzar, James claimed that Christian subjects were bound by their duties as loyal subjects irrespective of the extent of oppression by their prince. Since an oppressive ruler might serve


\(^{22}\) Ibid., 63.
God's purpose as a scourge to punish the people for some great sin, it would be unwise to thwart divine justice. By the same reasoning, James acknowledged that "wicked Princes" might fall in an uprising as a punishment according to the "providence of God"; however, such rebellion by the people is never justified. Therefore, "kingmaking" is God's business and "since [H]e that hath the only power to make him, hath the onely power to unmake him; and ye onely to obey, ...which lieth not in you to take off." To James contract theory provided a philosophical justification for resistance to a given monarch. Given the king's experiences with Buchanan as well as Scotland's fractious nobility and clergy, his fierce opposition to this theory is not surprising.

In contrast to contract theory James believed sovereignty resided in the person of the king, who God ordained to govern on earth with His authority. In establishing his arguments for the divine origin of monarchical authority James cited the biblical example of Saul, who was chosen by God "as a step-father to his people;" and "the election of that King lay absolutely and immediately in God's hands." Yet the people should not

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23 Ibid., 83.
24 Ibid., 68.
25 Ibid., 67.
fear this authority, since the coronation oath required monarchs to listen and observe the needs of their subjects. The king followed this scriptural case with a cursory description of the origin of civil law and monarchy in Britain. Monarchical prerogatives in Scotland and England were obtained by the conquests of James' dubiously historical ancestor King Fergus and William of Normandy. In the wake of these triumphs, the people of these realms accepted the kings' power to make laws (dare leges). Kings preceded estates, political assemblies, and were in fact the "authors and makers of the Laws and not the Laws of the kings." Finally, James employed a natural law justification for this political system which so "resembles Divinitie." Listing various offices of authority - magistrate, schoolmaster and judge - the king maintained:

Except by inuerting the order of all Law and reason, the commanded may be made to command their commander, the judged to iudge their Iudge, they that are gouerned, to gouerne their time about their Lord and gouernour.

The emphasis in this point, as elsewhere, was on harmony through hierarchy. Since this ordering had been divinely ordained, obedience and conformity would be rewarded by a prosperous society.

The Trew Law is remarkable for several reasons, not the least of which is that it was written by a king. Secondly,

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26 Ibid., 73.
27 Ibid., 76.
it was argued on the basis of scripture, historical
precedent and natural law, yet somehow maintains a cohesive
theme. Thirdly, although its ideas were not original, it
remained the only significant work in English that advanced
absolute monarchy by divine right.\textsuperscript{28} Lastly, despite the
fact that James saw to its distribution throughout Europe,
historians have until recently characterized its influence
as a mere novelty. Considered in the Scottish context of
the sixteenth century, this book contradicted the contract
theories of its foremost scholars. Recent events, such as
the Huntley-Bothwell rebellion in 1589 and the forthcoming
Gowrie Plot in 1600, also indicated that James’ political
model had not been accepted by all of his subjects.
Although he stated otherwise in the text’s introduction, the
king intended The Trew Law to serve as a polemic tool rather
than a precise theoretical model. Several historians, such
as S. J. Houston and Glenn Burgess, claim James’ statement
suggesting that monarchs are above the law resulted from his
fear of presbyterian extremists.\textsuperscript{29} This aspect of James

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\textsuperscript{28}Despite this claim to its significance Allen disqualifies James
as influential, because he was a Scotsman and “suffered the drawback of
himself being a king.” J. W. Allen, \textit{A History of Political Thought in
the Sixteenth Century} (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1928), 252.
\end{flushright}

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\textsuperscript{29}This interpretation by historians usually holds that James did
not intend his words to be taken beyond the Scottish context, or that
The Trew Law was exclusively intended to controvert resistance theories.
Burgess contends that, “faced with the horrors of Buchanan and Huguenot
resistance theory, James needed to demonstrate that there was [no]
earthly power superior to [kings].” Burgess, 41.
\end{flushright}
political thought did exist, but James still meant what he had written - a fact later revealed in his speeches and policies as king of England.

James' second work, *Basilikon Doron*, is a book of practical advice rather than abstract theory, which the king originally wrote as a private reflection and manual on kingship for his eldest son Henry. The initial printing in 1599 produced only 7 copies and remained secret until its mass publication for the London market just prior to James' coronation in 1603. Jenny Wormald views this tactic as a promotional campaign which highlighted the king's advocacy for moderate rule. She suggests that its idealization of a peaceful, prosperous kingdom recommended James as England's new monarch for his "moderate rather than arbitrary, compromising" style of kingship. Furthermore, the book became a "best-seller" within a month after its release, indicating that at least some of James ideas on the behavior of kings were widely known to his subjects early in his reign.30

Although the tone of *Basilikon Doron* is more restrained than *The Trew Law*, the text in no way loses the self-aggrandizing metaphors of James' earlier work. The dedicatory sonnet opens with this estimation of father and

son:

LO heere (my Sonne) a mirroure viue and faire,
Which sheweth the shaddow of a worthy King....
God giues not Kings the stile of Gods in vaine,
For on his Throne his Scepter doe they swey:
And as their subjects ought them to obey,
So Kings should feare and serue their God againe:
If then ye would enjoy a happe raigne.31

While the poem lauds the king’s virtue and promise of his heir, care is taken to emphasize that a prince’s chief responsibility is “guiding your people great and small.” Herein lies the most remarkable aspect of Basilikon Doron: it genuinely maintains its purported focus on the duties and responsibilities of the prince as governor of his kingdom.

The first book, titled “A Kings Christian Duetie Towards God,” makes slight mention of divine right: “Remember, that as in dignitie hee hath erected you above others, so ought ye in thankfulnesse towards him, goe as farre beyond all others.”32 But most of this section exhorts the prince to take his Christian faith seriously, and dedicate himself to thorough study of scripture. For James, spiritual and religious preparation was the basis of good kingship, since “my kingdome, was grounded upon the plaine wordes of the Scripture, without which all points of Religion are superfluous.”33 The second book, “A Kings

31King James I, Basilikon Doron, in Political Writings, Sommerville, 1.

32Ibid., 12.

33Ibid., 14.
Duetie in His Office," deals with the public obligations of a good Christian prince. In addressing a variety of issues from factions among the nobility to procuring a successful marriage, James exhorted his son to discharge his office with the principal virtues "Iustice and Equitie." The king claimed these virtues guided his policies concerning crime in the borderlands, being a good patron by rewarding faithful service, and his preference for peace is evident in the caution "to be slow in taking on a warre." Parliaments were deemed loyal and useful bodies for assisting the king in creating statutes, but James cautioned not to allow this institution to be "abused to mens particulars"; therefore, it should rarely be called since Scotland had "moe good Lawes then are well execute." Of course James openly declared his aversion for democratic principles, whether applied to secular or ecclesiastical institutions. This bias, as stated in the text, grew out of the king's experiences with "some fierie spirited men in the ministerie," who vilified him "because [he] was a King, which they thought the highest evill." Moreover, democracy tended to allow a faction to claim power and

34 Ibid., 20.
35 Ibid., 33.
36 Ibid., 21.
37 Ibid., 26; James was alluding to Andrew Melville's coterie of presbyterian ministers, who regularly castigated royal church policy during their sermons. See Willson, James VI and I, 122-123.
exploit its position at the expense of subjects and interests outside their circle.

The final book, "A Kings Behavior in Indifferent Things," addresses the importance of the prince's lifestyle and behavior as it pertains to public image. Whether commenting on diet, speech or recreational activities, moderation is the recurrent theme for guiding kingly activities. Special attention is given to table manners, hunting greatly encouraged and even advice on armor is offered - fashioned "light for away-running." Considering James' historical reputation on these topics, this section seems ironic, then felicitous in turn.

James claimed that his political theories pertained only to what "is fittest for this kingdome (Scotland)"; and his pledge to "speake nothing of the state of England" was factually accurate. However, Basilikon Doron's publication in 1603, followed by The Trew Law, indicates the king intended his new English subjects to be informed of their new monarch's approach to governing. From a publishing standpoint these works were a grand success with between 13,000 and 16,000 copies printed that year alone.

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38 King James I, Basilikon Doron, in Political Writings, Sommerville, 52.

39 Ibid., 11.

40 John Norton, a friend of Sir Robert Cecil, was the authorised publisher. An interesting legal case arose when Edward Allde was convicted of selling pirate copies (3,000) and underpricing; Wormald, 51.
People were understandably curious about this phenomenon of a scholar-king and eagerly pursued his writings. John Chamberlain wrote his friend Dudley Carleton, "I know not whether you have seen the King's book but I sent it at all adventures, for it is new here."\(^{41}\)

James' book may have been new in 1603, but its political schema was not novel in England, Scotland or the Continent. Based on the significant differences between English political institutions and their European counterparts, past historians surmised that Jacobean political theory initially shocked many parliamentarians.\(^{42}\)

This interpretation has been dramatically revised by recent research indicating that Continental absolutist theories, similar to James' own, had a substantial readership in England. Reacting to the traditional assertion that English political thought was excessively parochial, J. P. Sommerville argues that such a "notion is groundless." He also claims that an international discourse existed on the subject:

> The writings of foreign absolutists - Bodin, Barclay, Bédé - found English publishers. The works of James I and other English authors sold well abroad. There is little to distinguish the ideas of Buckeridge, Bolton or


Despite this cognizance of absolutist writings, such ideas did not reflect the practical reality in English political institutions. Furthermore, the most renowned proponents of absolute monarchy in England, Sir Robert Filmer and Thomas Hobbes, were born just the year before James published The Trew Law, precluding their participation in any discussion of Jacobean absolutism. Actually the king’s political thought had more in common with the Frenchman Jean Bodin’s concept of “Royal Monarchy” than anything written in the British isles during the sixteenth century. James most certainly read Bodin’s Six Books of the Commonwealth along with Buchanan’s required contract theory.

Similarities between Bodinian and Jacobean political theories exist throughout their respective writings. Both modeled their ideal kingdom on a “well-ordered family” to define an harmonious relationship between prince and subjects. Michael Mendle sees the two men as having

43 Sommerville, Royalists, 50-51.

44 Buchanan had James study John Mair’s Secundum Sententiarum (1510) as well as Hector Boece’s Hystory and Croniklis of Scotland (1536); however, the royal library also contained copies of Bodin’s Six Books (1576) and Method for the Easy Comprehension of History (1566). Wormald, 42-43; royal library list in Publications of the Scottish History Society, vol. 15, The Library of James VI, 1573-1583 (1893), xi-lxxv.

45 Bodin held that “the well-ordered family is a true image of the commonwealth,” and is both “the true source...of the commonwealth,” and “also its principal constituent.” Jean Bodin, Six Books of the Commonwealth, trans. M. J. Tooley (Oxford: Alden Press, 1955), 6.
agreed on the nature of absolute sovereignty residing strictly in kings, while depicting monarchs as "being God's 'living and breathing image.'" However, Mendle asserts that "a gulf of conception and an ocean of temperament separate" Bodinian absolutism from what he termed, "Fortescuean binary absolutism," which became the predominant Anglo expression of absolutism. It is important not to confuse James' own ideas with generalizations of English absolutism; although he was king of England, he was anything but English regarding political thought. A close examination of his writings reveals little if any connection to the limited monarchy and power sharing of Fortescuean constitutionalism. Both Bodin and James viewed sovereignty as a power bestowed by God that elevated the prince above subjects, church or papal authority, legislative bodies and the law. Bodin considered this last point to be the distinctive feature of absolute power.

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46Michael Mendle, "Parliamentary Sovereignty: a Very English Absolutism," in Political Discourse in Early Modern Britain, ed. Nicholas Phillipson, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 105. Bodin described sovereignty as imperium conferred by God upon princes to rule all subjects in their realm. Sovereignty consisted of five types of power: 1) to make laws; 2) to make war and peace; 3) to appoint "great officers of state;" 4) to grant clemency; 5) to require obedience; Bodin, Six Books 43-49.

47Mendle defines this type of monarchy, cultivated by Sir John Fortescue, as having two channels through which it exercised power - dominium politicum et regale. Kings in parliament legislated, taxed subjects and interpreted the common law as part of their ordinary powers. But kings also ruled autonomously when necessity required in military affairs, issuing proclamations, appointing ministers and councillors, and regulation of trade and currency. Ibid., 106,102.
From all this it is clear that the principal mark of sovereign majesty and absolute power is the right to impose laws generally on all subjects regardless of their consent... And if it is expedient that if he is to govern his state well, a sovereign prince must be above the law.\footnote{Bodin Six Books, 32; James' words were nearly an echo of Bodin: "...that I have at length proved, that the King is above the law, as both the author and giver; yet a good king will delight to rule by the lawe." James I, The Trew Law, in Sommerville, Political Writings, 75.}

Yet he also cautioned that princes were still bound by divine and natural laws, as well as their conscience regarding oaths.

Bodin constructed most of his arguments from "laws of nature," rather than attempting to derive political principals from scripture or historical precedent as James did in The Trew Law. Bodin's Six Books is a far more precise and complex presentation of divine right absolutism than anything James ever wrote. A key difference is that Bodin actually defined absolute monarchy, whereas James used it as a familiar term to his readers. Indeed it was not an uncommon term, and James Daly's research reviews the sundry applications of the word "absolute" in late-Elizabethan and Jacobean England.\footnote{Daly proposes three general categories for the term's usage: 1) complete, unconditional; 2) positive, decided; 3) positive, faultless. Daly, 227-50.} He argues that its political meaning at the beginning of the seventeenth century denoted some neutrally undoubted right, usually a prerogative exercised by the king alone. During the Civil War, and the years...
following, absolute rule became much closer in meaning to arbitrary rule, but this development occurred in the context of a constitutional crisis that did not exist in Jacobean England. To have called James an absolute monarch during his lifetime would not have inspired trepidation by even his staunchest opponents, such as Sir Thomas Wentworth or the jurist Edward Coke. The connection between absolute monarchical power and "tyranny" had yet to be established. James and his contemporaries identified tyranny with power that had been usurped from its proper holder, not necessarily with absolute monarchy. One of the great difficulties for early-Stuart historians' understanding of the period's political lexicon is finding an accurate definition of "absolutism." J. H. Burns points out that the word itself did not appear in the English language until the eighteenth century.\textsuperscript{50} Absolutism as a political theory did not really fit Jacobean England, because the word "absolute" did not evoke a commonly understood meaning regarding the nature and scope of monarchical power. Some historians follow this point by constructing definitions which preclude virtually all early-modern thinkers from qualifying as an absolutist.\textsuperscript{51} In other words, despite James' repeated


\textsuperscript{51}Nicholas Henshall goes so far as listing "not English" as a prerequisite for an absolutist. Nicholas Henshall, \textit{The Myth of Absolutism: Change and Continuity in Early Modern European Monarchy} (New York: Longman Publishing, 1992), 1-3. See also Burgess, 29.
claims that he was an absolute monarch, it is frequently argued "that neither James I nor his Scottish self, James VI, deserves to be labeled an absolutist."\(^{52}\)

Given the fluid meaning of absolute in the early seventeenth century, it is all the more important to determine how the king used the word. He could not have meant that absolute monarchs wielded completely unlimited power, since he acknowledged a prince's obligations to keep his coronation oath, obey God - "the sorest and sharpest schoolemaster" - and, that "a good king will frame all his actions according to the Law."\(^{53}\) James used the adjective in two ways: 1) to describe the incontestable nature of his hereditary claim to title; and, 2) to emphasize his complete jurisdiction concerning the royal prerogative. As a king who saw himself as Pater Patriae, James' brand of absolutism was an attempt to define his relationship with his subjects, not a refined political theory. By claiming to be "a free and absolute monarch" he merely asserted himself as the

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\(^{52}\) Burgess, 40; Perhaps the definition most appropriate for Jacobean England is offered by J. P. Sommerville: "Absolutists were thinkers who held that the prince is accountable to God alone for his actions within his realm, that his commands ought to be obeyed by his subjects provided that they do not conflict with divine positive or natural law, and that he (and those acting on his command) ought never to be resisted actively by his subjects." J. P. Sommerville, "Absolutism and Royalism," in The Cambridge History of Political Thought, 1450-1700, ed. J. H. Burns (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 348.

\(^{53}\) James I, The Trew Law, in Sommerville, Political Writings, 83; James was careful to remind his readers that a prince was not bound by the law and only observed it out of goodwill and "example-giving to his subjects." Ibid., 75.
rightful, hereditary king of Scotland (and later of England). The absolute nature of the royal prerogative itself was not really a contentious issue in Jacobean England. Instead, debate focused on the range of those governmental powers reserved for the king alone. Parliamentary concerns over somewhat unprecedented government powers, claimed by the crown as prerogative, were never fully resolved during James' reign.
CHAPTER III
KING AND GOVERNOR

When James VI of Scotland became James I of England in March 1603, this transformation was performed by a precedent setting assemblage of power brokers. A “Great Council,” composed of “Lords Spirituall and Temporall of this realme” worked with the late queen’s Privy Council to draft a proclamation declaring James the new king.¹ The fact that both religious and secular authorities were required to legitimate this proclamation is not surprising; however, it underscores the monarchy’s dual role as head of the political state as well as supreme governor of the Church of England.

With the ability to appoint Privy Councillors, Lord Lieutenants, local commissioners, judges, bishops and various court officials, the monarchy acted as the state’s executive. These powers, claimed as absolute prerogative, allowed kings to control public and religious policy, while overseeing their administration throughout the realm. But monarchical power was not unlimited. Parliamentary consent was required in order to pass new laws and raise revenue through taxation; and, although kings appointed most of the judges, they did not always rule in favor of the crown’s

position. Furthermore, most of the realm’s administrative tasks (e.g. tax collection) were carried out by local and provincial officials, who could disrupt the enforcement of policy if local resistance prevailed.

This chapter examines several key issues and events that demonstrate the practical side of James’ approach to governing. As governor of his church, he attempted to moderate factional squabbles between conservative bishops and Puritan clergyman, establishing a pluralistic policy that embraced compliant ministers of both groups. In general this policy was successful at repressing religious extremism and maintaining ecclesiastical unity. James’ occasionally turbulent relationship with the House of Commons owed much to the king’s inexperience with the large, deliberative legislative body, whose procedures and traditional privileges contradicted his ideal model for parliaments. The Commons’ obstructiveness concerning legislative and supply issues clearly rankled James, but this discord in Parliament never resulted in political crisis.

Whether or not James considered himself to be an absolutist, most historians now agree that he was not in practice. Many point to his inability to raise tax revenues and stabilize royal finances - a move Parliament
consistently thwarted. Resistance to the king’s authority was not limited to secular institutions in England. James’ allusions to his person as a type of temporal deity suggests another power he believed kings exercised in their realms: supreme ecclesiastical authority. As with politics, he did not tolerate ideas that allowed his authority to be superceded or excluded in religious matters. Andrew Melville’s “Two Kingdoms” theory drew the king’s ire in 1584 and eventually led to the clergyman’s exile from Scotland. Yet Melville’s theory continued to threaten James until he found a permanent solution. His solution was episcopacy. Although James railed against “proud, Papal Bishops,” he discovered their Protestant counterpart could be easier to ply and more loyal to the crown. Having curbed the pretensions of the Scottish clergy by 1603, James decided to coopt the episcopate structure that already existed in

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3 Melville claimed that clergy had a position in the state independent of crown interference regarding theological or spiritual issues. The Scottish Kirk was conceived as an independent, yet state related institution since the kirk could advise the crown on state matters. Melvillian presbyterianism likely led to passage of the Black Acts, which confirmed royal jurisdiction in all doctrinal matters on condition that it agreed with the word of God. Lee, *Great Britain’s Solomon*, 66.

England. However, the king was concerned about several vexatious controversies held over from late Elizabethan times: the issue of *jure divino* and Puritan opposition to Anglican worship forms.

Shortly after entering the realm in 1603, a group of Puritan ministers delivered the Millenary Petition requesting their “gracious and dread sovereign” to consider their proposals for reformation of the church. Led by John Reynolds, the ministers claimed they were neither “factious men” nor “schismatics aiming at the dissolution of the state ecclesiastical.” Instead, they sought to voice their grievances with the “divers abuses of the Church” in a “conference among the learned,” whereby bishops and Puritans could debate the merits of *jure divino* as well as the petition.\(^5\) The English bishops sought formal recognition of *jure divino*, a doctrine which held that bishops received authority directly from God. Considering James’ opinion that Puritans were a contentious group of “brain-sicke and headie Preachers,” it is interesting that he consented to

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\(^5\) Puritans began lobbying for a conference before James even arrived in London for his coronation. They intercepted him on his way south and proffered the Millenary Petition (signed by 1,000 ministers) which listed: signing with the cross in baptism & confirmation, administration of baptism by women, use of the ring in marriage, bowing at the name of Jesus and clerics wearing “popish” vestments as ceremonial practices to which they didn’t wish to conform. Kenyon, 117-19.
the Hampton Court Conference (January 1604). His sanction for this assembly may have been born of his keen interest in theological disputation. However, James' statement - "I doe equally love and honour the learned and grave men of either of these opinions. It can no wayes become me to pronounce so lightly a sentence, in so old a controversie" - indicates his desire to mediate between the two groups in hope of working a compromise. The conference did not produce harmony among Puritans and Anglicans, but James was able to secure agreement on several un-contentious items. Roger Lockyer attributes the king's behavior to his basic attitude of moderation and an awareness that many of his new subjects were both committed to the Church of England and simple reform. However, James was unwilling to remove any ceremonies from the Book of Common Prayer, explaining that the ministers had not made a persuasive argument:

...at the conference at Hampton Court, no apparent or grounded reason was shown why either the Book of Common Prayer or the church discipline here by law established should be changed, which were unreasonable considering

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6King James I, *Basilicon Doron*, in Political Writings, Sommerville, 6.

7This quote from *Basilicon Doron* reveals James' indifference on the ceremonial controversy. Ibid., 7.


9Ibid., 52.
that particular and personal abuses are remediable otherwise than by making general alterations.\(^{10}\)

S. R. Gardiner held that the conference failed because James did not maintain his tolerant policy towards the Puritan faction, stating, "the essential littleness of the man was at once revealed. More and more the maxim, 'no Bishop, no King,' became the rule of his conduct."\(^{11}\) While the king was determined to maintain episcopacy in England, he also had reservations about \textit{jure divino}. Ever mindful of his place as supreme ruler over all his subjects, James feared the independence this doctrine might justify for bishops.\(^{12}\) The king never fully embraced \textit{jure divino}. Instead, he adopted the view that episcopacy had apostolic origins and tradition placed bishops below kings.\(^{13}\)

Although he eventually championed episcopacy as the proper structure of the church, the king adopted it in order to maintain discipline and moderate the extremists among the clergy. James' support for the bishops may have developed through his experiences in Scotland where episcopacy seemed the only alternative to what he called, "a Scottish Presbytery, which agreeth as well with a monarchy as God and

\(^{10}\)Kenyon, 120.


\(^{13}\)Fincham and Lake, 169.
the devil." However, he may also have been influenced by theoretical works on the subject that confirmed his status as supreme governor and a church hierarchy which agreed with his notion of divine order. Richard Hooker's political ideas are usually presented as supporting the contract theories that James so despised. Yet it should be noted that Hooker allowed for governments ruled by monarchs who held their office by divine right, and were God's supreme temporal authority over all secular and ecclesiastical institutions within their realm. Furthermore, Hooker never suggests resistance as a justified act to limit monarchical power, suggesting he did not see a necessary link between limitation and the right to resist. James may have set aside Hooker's preference for contract theory and adopted some of his ideas on the advantages of episcopacy for maintaining religious unity within the realm.

A recent book addressing James' ecclesiastical polity is Lori Anne Ferrel's Government By Polemic. In her analysis of court sermon rhetoric from 1603-25, Ferrel emphasizes "discourse over action in the political arena."  


15 For an example of this depiction see Sommerville, Royalists and Patriots, 11-12.


17 Ferrel, Government By Polemic, 1.
She contends that while James pursued moderation in policy, royal publications — especially court sermons — reveal an episcopal "campaign by polemic" against Puritans. This carefully crafted rhetoric both constructed and perpetuated the negative stereotype of "Puritanism." Her work is an attempt to revive James' role in developing the cultural origins of the English Civil War.\(^{18}\) Although Ferrel acknowledges the consensual and non-confrontational nature of James' ecclesiastical policy, she maintains the king actively encouraged a polemic denouncing the Puritans' zealous reform ideology. Why did the king allow this to happen? The reason, according to Ferrel, was James' intense hatred of Catholics and Puritans.\(^{19}\) These groups advocated the common seditious practice of deposing monarchs in order to further their religious programs.

Although Ferrel's assessment of James' bias against Catholics and Puritans is quite correct, this fact does not necessarily extend to an argument for the high-road to Civil War theory. The king's predilection for compelling sermons is well-known, as he claimed to "cherish no man more than a good Pastor."\(^{20}\) While James tolerated Calvinist clergymen and Laudian prelates alike at court, he advised his son to

\(^{18}\)Ibid., 5-6.

\(^{19}\)Ibid., 133.

"represse the vaine Puritane," and "suffer not proude Papall Bishops." 21 From his perspective, opposing these polarizing religious sects was a prudent precaution, especially since he had been a target for assassination by both groups. Considering Puritan unwillingness to compromise or conform with "his church," James refused their plea for tolerance because he feared that to do so would further deteriorate ecclesiastical unity. 22

On the whole, the Jacobean church was pluralistic. James' opposition to Calvinists like Melville and Reynolds was matched by his restraining bishops like Richard Bancroft and William Laud, who sought a campaign to purge the ministry of its Puritan clergymen. Ever the peace-maker, James avoided appointing bishops who were strongly associated with either faction. James chose the moderate George Abbot for Archbishop of Canterbury in 1610, preferring him over the outspoken prelate Lancelot Andrews. John Williams, the former Bishop of Lincoln, replaced Bacon as Lord Keeper in 1621, after the latter's impeachment for

21 To moderate this statement, he added: "...but as some for their qualities will deserve to bee preferred before others, so chaine them with such bondes as may preserve that estate from creeping to corruption." Ibid.

22 This petition - A Supplication for Toleration Addressed to King James I (1609) - was in fact read by James, and a copy of it with his notations were published in 1859. In response to a paragraph recommending continued repression of Catholicism, James wrote, "millions of brainsick popes are more dangerous than one." Irene Carrier, ed., James VI and I: King of Great Britain (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 69.
corruption. The prominence at court of these clergymen, as well as other Calvinist ministers such as Andrew Willet and John Donne, calmed radical Protestants and attests to James' commitment to the via media. Add to this policy his opposition to William Laud and the king's commitment to church polity based on consensus and obedience rather than divisive confrontation seems evident. Limitations placed on bishops and clergy were ideological, not theological. In Maurice Lee's words: "The church was his church, he was its supreme governor, and it was an agency to be used to further the interests of the crown."

James success in shaping church polity did not provide any useful experience for dealing with England's representative political body: Parliament. David Smith contends that "no aspect of James I's kingship reveals his paradoxical blend of strengths and weaknesses, of wisdom and misjudgement, more plainly than his relations with his English Parliaments." Indeed, the accuracy of Smith's statement is witnessed in the king's first session in 1604

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23 James advice to Buckingham on Laud: "Take him to you. But on my soul you will repent it." Akrigg, Jacobean Pageant, 168.


25 Lee, Great Britain's Solomon, 165.

when he attended the Buckinghamshire Election Case between John Fortescue and Francis Goodwin. While informing the members of his impartiality concerning the outcome of the case, James let slip that his decision should not be considered an infringement on their parliamentary privileges since, "they derived all matters of priviledge from him."\(^{27}\) This statement, along with the minor controversy it sparked, has been both exaggerated and diminished by historians for its effect on later Jacobean Parliaments.\(^{28}\) James' comment may have made some members wary of his intentions, but the king prudently assured them that he had no desire to preempt Parliament's privilege in the matter. James should be faulted for calling unnecessary attention to a contentious issue, with little to gain even if he had won this argument. The Buckinghamshire election revealed his inexperience with a political institution whose constitutional role he did not thoroughly understand nor appreciate.

In his prior dealings with Scotland's unicameral Parliament James had a subservient institution that simply


enacted whatever bills his hand-picked committee of the articles had drawn up. Although dysfunctional as a representative body, the Scottish Parliament suited the king’s criteria for a successful legislature: the “making of good Lawes.” In 1584 it passed forty-nine acts in only two days, proving itself a useful ally in combating the Melvillian circle in the Scottish Kirk. Given the expedient role Parliament had played in James’ Scottish government it is not surprising he considered proceedings in the House of Commons to be disorderly, noisy and unproductive.

The Bate’s Case of 1606, which began in the wake of controversial crown impositions on Mediterranean currants, was illustrative of the recurrent discord that usually arose in parliament when the crown invoked its prerogative. After Robert Cecil successfully secured private assent for unilateral trade impositions on several luxury products, some traders at the London docks incited revolt against customs officers. Arrested as leader of the revolt, John

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29 King James I, Basilikon Doron, in Political Writings, Sommerville, 21.

30 This legislative agenda, labeled the “Black Acts,” directed an episcopate structure for the Kirk as well as sanctioning royal authority over all estates. See Lockyer, James VI & I, 16-17; The Acts of the Parliament of Scotland 1567-1592, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: Record Commission, 1814), 292-3.

31 Robert Cecil’s past experiences with the Levant Company’s royal grant for a monopoly levy upon certain products probably inspired the development of this new revenue. See Pauline Croft, “Fresh Light on the Bate’s Case,” The Historical Journal 30, no. 3 (1987): 523-39.
Bate found his complaint tested in the court of the Exchequer. The judges found in favor of the crown citing a variety of precedents that pointed toward a distinction between the use of impositions as tax, which required parliamentary consent, and impositions as a form of trade regulation, which fell under the king's prerogative. By integrating divine right and absolutist doctrine into his rationale Chief Baron Fleming's judgement broke with the common practice for judges of the period to focus solely upon technical aspects in their findings.

The king's power is double ordinary and absolute....The absolute of the king is not...[for] the benefit of any particular person, but is that which is applied to the general benefit of the people; and this power is not guided by the rules which direct only at the Common Law.

Fleming also attempted to dispel fears that this judgement would allow the crown to arbitrarily raise impositions in the future by asking all subjects to have faith in "the wisdom of the king, who guideth all under God by his wisdom"; for "many things are left to his wisdom..., rather than his power be restrained." The judge's distinction

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32 Specifically, Chief Baron Clarke cited a case under Edward III in which price limits for wool-fells were set to avoid debasing the local market; he also cited a case where Mary increased imposition on a tun of wine to four marks without an Act of Parliament. Tanner, 338-9.

33 Kenyon, 54.

34 Fleming cited the king's unlimited power to pardon felons as an example of the wisdom of monarchical self-restraint: "The king may pardon any felon; but it may be objected that if he pardon one felon he may pardon all...." Ibid., 55.
between ordinary versus absolute powers was important since ordinary powers were relegated to Common Law prescript, whereas absolute powers remained within the royal prerogative. This distinction was not lost on those parliamentarians who opposed the impositions on the grounds that they caused financial ruin for merchants.\(^35\) The ruling defeated assertions that impositions without Parliament’s consent were illegal, and Parliament temporarily acknowledged the crown’s authority in the matter.\(^36\)

However, the same factions which represented these interests from 1604 through 1607 resurfaced during the Commons debates of 1610 and 1621.

Regardless of the source of Parliament’s opposition toward James’ policies, it is important to note that tension began early in his English reign.\(^37\) This tension, sometimes veiled - sometimes evident, led James to comment disparagingly about the institution:

> The House of Commons is a body without a head. The members give their opinions in a disorderly manner. At


\(^{36}\)In November 1606, Parliament issued a list of grievances to the king, wherein they agreed the case “so nearly toucheth his ancient prerogative...that if any other persons shall further importune [the issue]...,” they would be considered “as persons worthy of reproof.” Kenyon, 58.

\(^{37}\)This study claims it surfaced as a result of court factions’ competition spreading to country allies and influencing Commons election. R. C. Munden, “The Defeat of John Fortescue: Court versus Country at the Hustings?,” *English Historical Review* 93 (1978): 811-816.
their meetings nothing is heard but cries, shouts, and confusion. I am surprised that my ancestors should ever have permitted such an institution to come into existence. I am a stranger, and found it here when I arrived, so that I am obliged to put up with what I cannot get rid of.38

The king made this statement to Spain's ambassador Sermiento. According to the ambassador's account, James also envied the Spanish monarch because "the Cortes of Castile is composed of little more than thirty persons."39 This comment might seem like a petty complaint against an established political institution. However, it arose not from an unwillingness to share power; rather the king despised the large number of diverse voices imploring crown favour at court while blocking virtually all of his agenda.40

Disagreements between the crown and some members in the House of Commons regarding the royal prerogative and Parliamentary privileges were not unique to Jacobean England. Many of the debates regarding matters of foreign policy, ecclesiastical issues or right to free speech could easily have taken place in Elizabethan times. The two latter issues were taken up in debate during the fourth

39 Ibid.
40 James political agenda: The unification of Scotland and England, ecclesiastical uniformity, maintain peace with major European powers, and reinforce that peace through a match between Henry (later Charles) and the Spanish infanta.
session of 1610 by Sir Herbert Croft and Sir Francis Bacon. Croft moved for a Petition of Right to the king declaring, that in "all previous Parliaments [members] had freely disputed anything concerning ourselves." Bacon followed with a speech in which he cited a case under Elizabeth whereby the queen forbade debate concerning religious matters, claiming that "it belonged to the bishops." As it happened, the case Bacon mentioned ended with Peter Wentworth’s being sent to the Tower, only to have Elizabeth pardon and restore him to his seat in the House of Commons.

Elizabeth’s ability to manage Parliament consensus was not a strength of James. If he detected a challenge to his authority as king, confrontation invariably ensued. This sort of reaction by the king began with his first session after the House of Commons had presented a list of sixteen grievances, which included a correction regarding the origin of Parliamentary privileges. James’ speech at the prorogation of Parliament in 1604, served only to reprimand "some idle heads" in the Commons for their "boldness to press upon [his] lenity" by petitioning matters that touched

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42This case from 1576, pertained to a proposal in the Commons for national prayer and fasting. Wentworth took issue with the queen’s invoking her prerogative and declared that without free speech "it is none but a school of flattery." G. R. Elton, The Tudor Constitution (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960), 263-5; 278.
the king's prerogative. He ended his speech with the oft-quoted utterance, "the best apology-maker of you all, for all his eloquence, cannot make all good."43

A basic complaint by the king was that the House of Commons did not represent the collective interests of English citizens; rather they pursued policies that primarily benefitted merchants and the gentry.44 The truth of this assessment is evident by the consistent majority representation of these groups, as well as the issues they most vigorously pushed in floor debates.45 During Cecil's failed Great Contract negotiations with Parliament in 1610, the Commons persistently pressed for abolition of wardships, feudal tenures and reform of purveyance before addressing supply. Despite Cecil's statement in the House of Lords that "to talk with the lower House about the retribution before we receive contribution...is altogether unfit," the secretary eventually engaged in bargaining with the committee of grievances.46 After ten months of witnessing his prerogative bartered in the Commons, James intervened

43Kenyon, 36-7.
44This orientation of House membership violated James' maxim to abstain from "holding them (Parliaments) for any men's particulars." King James I, Basilicon Doron, in Political Writings, Sommerville, 21; For specific complaints of Parliamentarians as self-serving see Kenyon, 36; and Akrigg, Letters, 248.
45According to David Smith, the composition of the Commons were an extension of the Lords along with significant minorities of merchants and lawyers. Smith, Stuart Parliaments, 27.
46Foster, vol. 1, 12.
and requested a subsidy £500,000 and a land tax of £200,000 without "grieving the poorer sort of subjects or which shall diminish any part of the profit which he doth now receive."\textsuperscript{47} The king extended this offer in full knowledge that it would be rejected. He clearly disliked a negotiating process that openly connected supply with redressing grievances.

James' approach to Parliament after 1610 indicated agreement with Sir Francis Bacon's advice prior to the Parliament of 1614, that he should "put off the person of a merchant and contractor, and rest upon the person of a King."\textsuperscript{48} After 1610, James called Parliament only three times, on each occasion he attempted to guide the parameters of their debate by opening sessions with speeches that invariably included a lecture on proper conduct for their proceedings. In 1614, he proposed that session's proceedings be based on mutual love and sincerity, hoping "to make it a parleamente of love." However, he voiced concern that his benevolence would be exploited, and he would be required "to styre you upp to goe on to the

\textsuperscript{47}Ibid., vol. 2, 313-16.

\textsuperscript{48}Francis Bacon, The Letters and Life of Francis Bacon, ed. James Spedding, vol. 4 (London: Longman, Green, and Co., 1890), 371; Bacon also opined of the 1610 session that "men being possessed with a bargain, it bred in them an indisposition to give,...besides Bargain and Gift are antitheta." Ibid., 370.
principle buseness with moare alacretye." In his speech at the 1621 opening of Parliament the king asked both houses to consider their duties while in session:

This I put you in mind of, that you serve a monarch. Now consider, Who calls you? your King...why you are called: To advise the king in his urgent affairs, to give him your best advice in such errands as he shall ask of you...also to supply his necessities; and this is the proper use of parliaments.

Near the end of his reign James had clearly wearied of the Commons' tendency to register grievances and "heape them together in one scroule, lyke an armie." He believed this practice slowed proceedings and created discord in the realm, rather than service as faithful advisors in an harmonious assembly. He warned members that "to hunt after Grievances to the prejudice of your king and yourselves, is not the errand" for which they had been summoned. In practice, James desired to use the English Parliament infrequently to address a few specific needs of the kingdom. He hoped its proceedings would pass smoothly, and with dispatch, addressing only the issues for which he called any given session. Such a role for Parliament made sense to him.

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49 This same speech included an open threat to unruly, outspoken parliamentarians: "And I maye saye with the prophete, 'Woe is to him that shall caste dissensyon.'" Cobbet, 1153-4.

50 Cobbet, 1176.

51 Ibid., 1156.

52 Ibid., 1179-80.
in theory, and it seemed to work well in Scotland, at least for his ends.

James did not expect English parliamentarians to share his desire to alter their institution's functions in a way that might have deprived them of the ability to petition about grievances and debate policy. Yet, he had hoped to receive more cooperation from Parliament regarding supply and legislation. Instead, matters he wished to see resolved were usually met with obstruction, then deferred until grievances were voiced and petitioned to the crown for redress. In the early years of James' reign, while Salisbury managed crown representation in the House of Commons, this conflict was less pronounced. Unfortunately for the king, later Parliaments included far fewer councillors or members that were amenable to crown interests. David Willson's well-known study of the Stuart Privy Council identifies several trends that led to declining royal influence in the Commons.\textsuperscript{53} The key developments, according to Wilson were: 1) the growing hostility in the Commons towards privy councillors as sitting members; 2) exclusion of Attorneys General (Bacon was the last to attend in 1614); 3) the Speaker's loss of control over the order of business; 4) a divided Privy

\textsuperscript{53}David Harris Willson, \textit{The Privy Councillors in the House of Commons, 1604-1629} (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1940; reprint, New York: Octagon Books, 1971).
Council (Spanish party vs. anti-Spanish). These problems are not surprising. Relative to its Elizabethan predecessor, Jacobean government de-emphasized the roles that Council and Parliament played in administering the kingdom. Instead, James relied on officers of the court or selective councillors to carry out the required duties.

Conrad Russell's famous description of early-Stuart Parliaments as "an event and not an institution" may be an exaggeration, but he is undoubtedly correct in stating that its members did not consider themselves a permanent check and balance on executive power. When James commended or criticized them for their conduct as "his advisors," not even the most contentious parliamentarian would have questioned the king's characterization of their role. James blamed the Commons' combativeness and self-interest for the failure of his Union proposal, the Great Contract and the crown's troubled finances. He also followed through on his threat "that the more wayward you shall be I shall be the more unwilling to call you to parliament." Maurice Lee has calculated that of James' twenty-two-year reign, Parliament was in session for only thirty-six months. He clearly considered it one of many institutions to assist in

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54 Russell, Parliaments, 1621-1629, 3.
governing, rather than a necessary foundation for English constitutional government.

It has been demonstrated here that conflict did indeed exist in Jacobean Parliaments, but the issues that caused discord were not entirely unprecedented. Although friction between the House of Commons and the crown may have been more acute under James than his Tudor predecessor, it was also less frequent. Parliament simply did not meet often enough to warrant a characterization of the Jacobean period as rife with Parliamentary conflict. At bottom, the goal of all James' policies was harmony through mutual love and goodwill, with him presiding over the result: a peaceful and contented kingdom. His statement - "My intention was ever [that] you should have most cause to praise my discretion, when you saw I had most power" - reveals the level of trust he desired from all his subjects in securing their satisfaction.\(^5\)\(^6\) James' style of kingship was primarily marked in two ways: his resounding assertion of the absolute and divine nature of monarchical prerogatives, and his usual restraint in exercising these presumed powers. These common aspects of James' executive style were established in his theoretical writings, dealings with the clergy and speeches in Parliament.

\(^{56}\) King James I, *Speech to Parliament, 1607*, in *Political Writings*, Sommerville, 165.
CHAPTER IV
CLIENTAGE AT THE JACOBEAN COURT

"In early Stuart England the government was the king."¹ This statement by Roger Lockyer shows that the locus of state power during James' reign resided at court, not in the halls of Parliament. The daily direction of government policy on commerce, religion, foreign affairs, pending legislation and execution of civil law originated at court, and these functions of government were the realization of the monarch's responsibility to govern. Therefore, in theory all executive power flowed from the person of the monarch, and all actions performed rightly in his name received legitimacy as acts of the king. Early-modern monarchs, especially English ones, were not despotic leaders with unquestioned, omnipotent authority. They acted within commonly accepted moral, traditional, routine and Common Law boundaries that curtailed tendencies toward arbitrary rule. Furthermore, English monarchs did not have a standing army with which they might impose their will. In reality James required the consent and collaboration of subjects to rule his kingdoms, although nobody at court would have described circumstances this way. He made use of his Privy Council, requested counsel from Parliament or turned to certain

¹Lockyer, The Early Stuarts, 172.
individuals of his choice for advice. James commonly employed his ministers to execute royal policy and many of these appointed positions offered great remunerative and prestige value. As such, those lucky enough to be appointed to positions with direct access to the king were envied by others not as fortunate. James clearly understood the inherent problems in court patronage and counseled his son Henry to “choose your servants for your own use, and not for the use of others.”

Patron-client relationships were the foundation for social and political interconnections in early modern society. Patrons and clients formed their symbiotic associations for mutual benefit as a kind of informal social contract. The relationship stipulated inequality as the patron was usually a person of comparatively greater wealth and status, who required service and/or support from the client. In return the patron promised remuneration, opportunities for career advancement, and possibly protection - depending upon the duration of their association. This system for social contracts often produced extended networks of patronage within its pyramid

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structure, with clients becoming patrons to others in a descending hierarchy.³

The Tudor legacy of centralizing power in the hands of the monarch, combined with macro social and economic changes, to significantly alter the structure of patronage to a court centered system.⁴ The basis of medieval relationships - lord, vassal, various followers - shifted to a less permanent, more tenuous network that extended from the court to the countryside. Key to this complex development was the prominence of large magnates and favourites at court, and their ability to manipulate the royal bounty to reward their followers, who often numbered in the hundreds. This system also relied upon "brokers," often important women at court, to procure positions for clients in search of a patron. According to Linda Levy Peck, brokers' usefulness lay in their ability to join "private and public spheres" in an unofficial, political role regarding the distribution of patronage.⁵ In a sense, royal patronage meant wealth, power, prestige and the privilege to mingle with the most fashionable of social classes. With


⁴Linda Levy Peck describes the forces that contributed to royal centralization as the "power to regulate social and economic behavior, the break with Rome, the growth in numbers of the landed elite, and changing patterns of commerce." Peck, Court Patronage and Corruption, 3.

⁵Ibid., 68.
these benefits at stake, the court tended to draw some of the most ambitious and talented people, all hoping to obtain a profitable position.

Sir Anthony Weldon noted that ambitious courtiers, or "favor-seekers," were never in short supply at the Jacobean court. He quipped that Robert Carey "most ingrately did catch at [Elizabeth's] last breath, to carry it to the rising Sun then in Scotland," that he might "find favour" with the heir apparent shortly after the queen's death. Of course Carey was not unique in his ambition for a place at the king's side. Even Francis Bacon, himself an eager suitor, found the numerous pursuers of royal patronage to be "a kind of poison, and infection, to public proceedings."

Political maneuvering at court began before James even reached London when Henry Percy, the Earl of Northumberland, challenged the authority of the late queen's privy councillors in announcing the new monarch. Northumberland, a wealthy recusant noble to whom James had offered hope for advancement and religious tolerance, hoped to assert himself early in the new reign and assure his place at court.

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6 Weldon found Carey's behavior all the more distasteful as he was Elizabeth's "neare kinsman." Weldon, 3.


8 While Elizabeth was still alive, James began secret correspondence with Cecil, Henry Howard, Percy & others. Hoping to keep a powerful noble like Northumberland in support of his succession he wrote: "As for catholiques I will nather persecut any that will be quyet,...nather will I spare to advance any of them that will by good
After hearing that a commission was to be appointed for examining and allowing suits, the same Northumberland wrote to Cecil stating that he would consider it a disgrace were he not given a seat on the commission. Unfortunately for the earl, his aspiration for civil power was undone in the wake of the Gunpowder Plot by his relation to Thomas Percy, one of the conspirators.

When James finally reached London and ascended his throne in 1603, courtiers scurried to Whitehall to win favour. G. P. V. Akrigg aptly quotes King Lear, "Who loses and who wins, who's in, who's out?" to express the mood at court. Early on it seemed clear the biggest loser was Sir Walter Raleigh, who became ensnared by a plot to eliminate him as a rival for the king's favour. His persecutors - Robert Cecil and Henry Howard, Earl of Northampton - forcefully argued that Raleigh had accepted a large Spanish payment for leading a plot to depose James in favor of his cousin, Lady Arbella Stuart. Since both Cecil and Howard

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service worthelly deserve it." King James VI to Henry Percy, Earl of Northumberland, 24 March 1602, in John Bruce, ed., Correspondence of King James VI of Scotland With Sir Robert Cecil... (New York: AMS Press, 1968), 75.


Akrigg, Jacobean Pageant 34.

11Convicted of High Treason and sentenced to death, Raleigh escaped execution when James granted him respite (not pardoned) and commuted his sentence to life imprisonment.
proved themselves able and loyal allies in effecting a smooth succession, the king was inclined to trust their judgement and expertise during his early years in England. Together the two men formed the center of the "Spanish faction," so-called for their support of rapprochement with Spain and the fact that many high officials received Spanish pensions during this period.\textsuperscript{12}

How did a courtier avoid disasters while managing to secure favour? Linda Levy Peck's study, "The Mentality of a Jacobean Grandee," based on the career of Northampton, is a template for how successful nobles vied for the king's favour.\textsuperscript{13} According to Peck, English grandees shared some common features which distinguished them from other nobles. They were people who expended vast amounts of money and effort to impress James. Grandees invested in royal entertainments, extravagant clothing, art, patronized writers, divines, historians, artists and some built prodigy

\textsuperscript{12}Sir John Digby, James' ambassador to Spain, intercepted numerous dispatches between the Spanish embassy in London and the court in Madrid which revealed the various pensioners. Digby transcribed these letters, added his own commentary and forwarded them to James, who apparently found no fault with these payments as he did nothing to end the practice. Garrett Mattingly, \textit{Renaissance Diplomacy} (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1988), 225-6.

\textsuperscript{13}The etymological origin of the term is the Spanish \textit{grandes}, the higher nobility of Castille. Their status differed from English grandees in that Spanish \textit{grandes} had an elevated legal standing and their large estates tended to have feudal characteristics which separated them from crown control.
houses as testimony to their household’s noble tradition.\textsuperscript{14} Described by contemporaries as a Tacitean sycophant, Henry Howard praised the Count of Castiglione’s description of a proper courtier as: “...someone who is not only an ornament of the court but also the king’s political officer,... skilled in rhetoric and values of the ancients.”\textsuperscript{15} His earliest ambitions at court were frustrated by Elizabeth’s suspicions of anyone related to Thomas Howard, the Fourth Duke of Norfolk. Still, he believed that he was “living beneath the compass of his birth” and aimed to correct this state of affairs by developing good relations with influential figures at court.\textsuperscript{16} A graduate of King’s College, Cambridge, Howard earned a good reputation as a scholar by his frequent lectures at Trinity Hall. When he began corresponding with James late in Elizabeth’s reign, Howard’s reputation as the most learned nobleman in England recommended him for future offices under the next ruler. What is most interesting about Northampton’s and James’ relationship is how closely the earl resembled the king’s


\textsuperscript{15}Quoted in Peck, “Jacobean Grandee,” 150.

\textsuperscript{16}Howard was longtime friends with Francis and Anthony Bacon, and for a time close friend of Robert Devereux, 2d Earl of Essex. Quote located in Dictionary of National Biography, vol. 10, 29.
ideal for a peaceable, obedient, virtuous and capable noble.\(^{17}\) Northampton’s attempt to fashion himself into both an ornament and a useful politician, apparently gave James’ confidence in the earl’s abilities as evidenced by the sundry responsibilities bestowed on the earl: 1603, privy councillor; 1604, lord warden of the Cinque ports; 1608, lord privy seal; 1612, commissioner of the treasury.\(^{18}\)

Northampton’s proximity to James initially depended upon his relationship with Robert Cecil, the Earl of Salisbury, who had served Queen Elizabeth as her secretary of state and continued in this office after the succession. Although the secretary had discordant relations with many of the people at court, few doubted his political savvy or competency as a statesman. As the son of William Cecil, who had served Elizabeth as Lord Treasurer, Robert Cecil possessed a keen sense for political opportunity and remarkable administrative skills. Salisbury achieved a greater concentration of power than any other English government official by retaining the secretaryship, his position as Master of the Court of Wards and being appointed

\(^{17}\text{James’ greatest concerns with the nobility were their tendencies toward disobedience, arrogance and factional squabbling. See King James I, }Basilicon Doron,\text{ in Political Writings, Sommerville, 28-29, 37.}\)

\(^{18}\text{Other titles and honors included: 1604, Baron of Marnhull, Dorsetshire, and Earl of Northampton; 1605, Knight of the Garter; 1608, lord privy seal; 1609, high steward of the University of Oxford; 1612, chancellor of Cambridge University.}\)
Lord Treasurer in 1608.\textsuperscript{19} The secretary’s “alliance” with the Howard family was made out of common-interest rather than any shared affinity between the two households. Clearly Henry Howard’s close association with the Earl of Essex did not impress Salisbury, whose rivalry with Elizabeth’s fallen favourite was well known.\textsuperscript{20} However, after his father Lord Burghley died in 1598, Salisbury was sorely in need of support among the powerful nobility as he had many envious detractors who might attempt to undermine his position under James. Letters between the two earls suggest a polite, if not friendly relationship between collaborators. Reports that Northampton vented his hostility for the secretary after his funeral in 1612, by stating that Salisbury had joined Queen Elizabeth in hell could be a reference to a running joke from earlier years.\textsuperscript{21}

\textsuperscript{19}Cecil’s remarkable political career began in 1584 as an M. P. for Westminster; sworn to the Privy Council in 1591; appointed Secretary of State in 1596; Master of the Court of Wards in 1598; made Viscount Cranborne in 1604; Earl of Salisbury in 1606, also a knight of the Garter; appointed Lord Treasurer 1608.

\textsuperscript{20}During his trial for contempt and disobedience Essex made the outrageous claim that he had overheard Cecil stating that the infanta of Spain was the true heir to the English throne. Cecil quickly acquitted himself of this baseless charge and thanked James by correspondence for having faith in his loyalty to the crown. Sir Robert Cecil to King James VI, 1600, in Correspondence of King James With Cecil, Bruce, 4.

\textsuperscript{21}The months following Cecil’s death produced a flood of libels disparaging the secretary’s private morals and public corruption. See John Chamberlain to Dudley Carlton, July 2 1612, in McClure Thomson, The Chamberlain Letters, 92. Northampton may have joined the chorus with his comments, but he made similar comments in jest to Salisbury in their correspondence. “The Earl of Northampton to the Earl of Salisbury, Her Majesty’s Stationary Office,” 1606, Calendar of the Manuscripts of the Marquess of Salisbury, (London, 1976), part 18, c. 424.
Whether or not Northampton and Salisbury had hostility for each other is difficult to say with certainty. If they did harbor animus, both men veiled their emotions for the sake of political gain and harmony at court. Considering Elizabeth’s reluctance to declare her successor, James believed both Howard’s influence with the nobility as well as the weight of Cecil’s support would ensure his claim to the English crown. In this context James, Cecil and Howard needed each other’s cooperation to further their respective ambitions.

The king sought to make this political triangle a much closer group than just odd bedfellows cooperating for mutual gain. Even a cursory look at his letters to these men, and others of their households, reveals James’ preference for informal relationships with his highest officials. The language itself in these letters is often sarcastic as well as frivolous, and James’ penchant for pet-names is obvious – dubbing Cecil the “little beagle,” Northampton “sir black-face,” and Buckingham “Steenie.” An excellent example is this letter written to Cecil, and Thomas and Henry Howard as the king made his way to Greenwich for his wife’s accouchement.

A challenge to a trinity of knaves.
If I find not at my coming to Greenwich that the big Chamberlain have ordered well all my lodging, that the little saucy Constable have made the house sweet...that the fast-walking Keeper of the Park have the park in order..., then shall I at my return...make the fat Chamberlain to puff, the little cankered beagle to
whine, and the tall black and coal-faced Keeper to glower.\textsuperscript{22}

James' sense of humor, often remarked on by contemporaries, indicates that he enjoyed aiming deprecatory comments at powerful men whom he considered both clients and friends. Some historians have interpreted this behavior to be the king's way of reminding those close to him that he was king and they his subjects. Although maintaining his preeminence may have been an ulterior motive, James simply preferred to keep a jocular, unpretentious environment amongst those closest to him.

James' preference for informality and love of leisure is very compelling for historians. The generalization that Salisbury managed government affairs while the king, Thomas and Henry Howard, and a coterie of other courtiers moved about the realm hunting and banqueting holds true for James' early years in England. James' reliance on his diligent councillor for governance inspires some historians to depict a disturbing situation in which a derelict king left all responsibility to an overburdened bureaucrat:

Salisbury was greatly overworked. Few pictures offer a more vivid contrast than that of the little hunchbacked Secretary bending over his papers at midnight and that

of the King lolling at ease or galloping over hill and dale after a rabbit.\textsuperscript{23}

If left alone this description puts forth a flawed image of the Jacobean court and administration. Yes, James often left London to explore country estates and woodlands. Yes, Salisbury was the guiding force behind crown policy at this stage of James' reign. However, the king did not simply abdicate the responsibility of governing to his secretary. They remained in contact through regular dispatches, and Salisbury was mindful to keep several confidants with the royal entourage in order to apprize him of court developments.\textsuperscript{24} Furthermore, this concentration of executive power under one official was not unprecedented in England. Henry VIII entrusted two successive ministers, Wolsey and Cromwell, with great discretion over royal policy as well as control over bureaucratic appointments.\textsuperscript{25}

Allowing one minister such a free hand over administrative and legislative matters was not new for James either. John Maitland - considered the last of the king's "tutors" in Edinburgh - had a virtual monopoly on state

\textsuperscript{23}Willson, \textit{King James VI and I}, 177.

\textsuperscript{24}Cecil corresponded regularly with the Earl of Shrewsbury as well as Sir Thomas Lake, the royal keeper of the records.

\textsuperscript{25}Although most of Elizabeth's reign witnessed an inner circle of advisors sharing power, the deaths of Leicester, Walsingham and Hatton combined with the Essex conspiracy allowed Robert Cecil to gain a dominant position on the Privy Council. See Wallace MacCaffrey, "Patronage and Politics Under the Tudors," in \textit{The Mental World of the Jacobean Court}, ed. Linda Levy Peck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 21-35.
power as chancellor of Scotland from 1587 to 1592. In 1589, James published a letter to his subjects explaining the circumstances that necessitated a secret voyage to Denmark. His description of Maitland bears noting:

As I kept it generally close from all men, upon my honor...I kept it so from the chancellor, as I was never wont to do any secrets of me weightiest affairs, two reasons moving me thereto...and therefore, remembering what envious and unjust burden he daily bears, for leading me, by the nose as it were, to all his appetites, as if I were an unreasonable creature, or a bairn that could do nothing of myself, I thought... [it wrong] to be the occasion of the heaping of further unjust slander upon his head.²⁶

Maitland’s tenure was abbreviated in 1592 by the allegation that he had conspired in the murder of the Earl of Moray. Because the chancellor had become highly unpopular with the nobility, the Kirk and the populace in Edinburgh, James allowed this “unjust slander” to bring about the fall of his able advisor. Although the king found it necessary to order Maitland to take leave of court, he never formally dismissed his chancellor. Loyalty was not one of James’ most noted attributes; however, he remained steadfast in support of Maitland after the Moray murder scandal as well as Salisbury after he received the blame for failing to pass the Great Contract. While a courtier’s fortunes may rise and fall based on simple favour, James’ constancy toward able ministers who rendered good service reveals his gratitude

²⁶King James VI to the People of Scotland, 22 October 1589, Akrigg, ed., The Letters, 99.
for making "good end of that wearisome work."  

James’ choice of Maitland in Scotland and later Salisbury in England as chief ministers produced similar benefits and liabilities. Obviously, both men were excellent administrators and somewhat effective agents for royal legislative initiatives. As mentioned earlier, they used these skills plus their weight with James to exercise virtual monopolies on state power and control appointments for bureaucratic posts.  

Yet this power led to widespread discontent amongst the political elite as paths for aspiring office-holders were often obstructed. Moreover, this system of narrow channels for decision-making and patronage led to factionalism as various powerful groups consisting of notable families, interests and prominent courtiers vied for the king’s ear. Most everyone acknowledged Maitland’s and Salisbury’s technocratic expertise, yet opponents of James’ ministers appropriated popular representations that reviled them as Machiavellian schemers struggling to maintain their grip on power at the expense of others more virtuous.

Although concentrating power in a sole official created an inviting target for criticism, the direction of that

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28 As Master of the Court of Wards, Cecil had a greater role in terms of direct patronage than did Maitland.

29 Popular impressions of cunning and deceit in the Jacobean court will be discussed more thoroughly in the next chapter.
criticism served a useful purpose for James. If powerful ministers were seen as the originators of unpopular policies or legislation, the king himself might be spared the blame. Of course this posture did not shield James from all criticism, but it is curious that this pattern of narrowing authority and patronage did not damage his reputation. Indeed, this practice was continued throughout James' reign in England, primarily to limit the access of suitors to the king.

After Salisbury's death in 1612, the Howards coopted the king's favourite, Sir Robert Carr, and together they managed to filter all requests for royal aid through two members of their circle - Carr and Thomas Howard, Earl of Suffolk. James reminded Carr of this status in a letter imploring the favourite to consider the benefits enjoyed by his family as an extension of their relationship:

> What can or ever could thus trouble your mind? For the exterior to the world, what can any servant expect of their prince but countenance and reward? Do not all court graces and place come through your office as Chamberlain, and rewards through your father-in-law's that is Treasurer? Do not ye two, as it were, hedge in all the court with a manner of necessity to depend upon you?\(^{31}\)

\(^{30}\) Examples include: passage of the Black Acts (1584) increased the earl of Arran's unpopularity - especially with the Scottish Kirk; although successful, Maitland's Parliamentary reform in 1587 allowing lesser landholders eligibility, angered many in the higher nobility; the controversial expansion of items subject to impositions and the Great Contract proposal were both widely viewed as Cecil's work.

The Howards' position as brokers for crown sponsorship declined somewhat after Northampton's death in 1614, then vanished after Carr and his wife Frances Howard were convicted for the murder of Sir Thomas Overbury.

Carr, whom James created Earl of Somerset in 1613, embraced the Spanish faction so completely that when he lost face at court, supporters of the Howard family quickly fell away. Although Thomas Howard, Earl of Suffolk, held the Treasurership until 1618, the fall of the Spanish faction in 1615, loosened the Howard family's grip on patronage and ended their preeminence in Jacobean government. At this point the composition of James' inner-circle of advisors became more fluid. Most notably, Sir Francis Bacon began taking a more prominent role, first as Lord Keeper (1617), then as Lord Chancellor (1618). Also, Lionel Cranfield served as Lord Treasurer (1621), and William Herbert, the Earl of Pembroke, became James' Lord Chamberlain (1615). Some of James' ministers did not hold office for more than a few months, which seemed unusual in contrast to Elizabeth's stable nucleus of councillors. Several others fell victim

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32 The most important of these supporters was Sir Francis Bacon, who had been Northampton's close friend and assisted Frances Howard in obtaining her divorce from the earl of Essex thus securing her marriage to Somerset. As attorney-general Bacon conducted a vigorous prosecution that led to a death sentence, but James ultimately pardoned the earl and Lady Somerset. See Bacon, The Letters, vol. 4, 392.

33 E.g. Sir Thomas Egerton, Lord Treasurer June 1613 - July 1614; Henry Montagu, Lord Treasurer December 1620 - September 1621; Sir Robert Naunton, Secretary of State January 1618 - Jan 1619.
to Parliamentary impeachment, a revived medieval procedure. However, one figure whose standing at court not only held steady, but continued to improve through the end of James' reign was George Villiers.

Villiers was initially promoted at court by a group opposed to the Howards, who hoped he might be used as a counter to the private sway held by Carr, and, by extension, the Howard family. The scheme did not work as planned, nor did it yield the desired policy changes. In truth, Villiers' personal influence with James developed very gradually, and it did not directly cause Carr to lose favour with the king. Furthermore, young George's early advancement did not translate into an immediate reversal on Spanish policy - as hoped by some - since he declared himself to be for the Spanish marriage in 1616. In the end, the new favourite's success benefitted his family, his clients at court and himself. Villiers' ability to hold James' affections was the key to his success. The king heaped honors and offices upon his favourite, for, as he declared to his Privy Council: "You may be sure that I love the Earl of Buckingham more than anyone else.... Christ had his John, and I have my George." Shortly after becoming

34 This group, usually called the anti-Howard faction, was led by Lord Ellesmere, the earl of Pembroke, Archbishop Abbot and Sir Ralph Winwood.

the Marquis of Buckingham in 1619, James appointed him Lord High Admiral, a post in which Buckingham distinguished himself (with the aid of Lionel Cranfield) by improving efficiency and cutting corruption in ship procurements.

But bureaucratic reforms were not really Buckingham's motivation; rather, he sought to capitalize on the king's well-known liberality with pensions and titles. With his regular and uniquely private access to James, Buckingham realized that his position would allow him a degree of influence over royal patronage commensurate with his personal relationship with the king. Between 1618 and 1620, he arranged a system which directed all requests for honors, pensions and lower offices to him before a final referral to James.36

Buckingham's place as royal broker allowed him to place supporters in numerous offices as well as dispense honors to relatives, thereby increasing the base of his support at court and the esteem of his family. The favourite's ambition to raise his family was supported by a declaration of the king to advance them above all others. James followed through on this pledge by making the favourite's elder brother John, the Viscount Purbeck, his younger brother Christopher, the Earl of Anglesey, and even his mother was created Countess of Buckingham. Moreover,

36See Lockyer, James VI & I, 172.
cousins, aunts, uncles and relatives by marriage often found the king’s broker to be quite generous in proffering titles, pensions and lucrative marriages. \(^{37}\) Despite Buckingham’s considerable pull regarding royal patronage, it is inaccurate to say that he claimed a monopoly on the king’s appointments. In fact, very few of the candidates he put forward for higher offices were selected by James. The few men he supported that were selected, such as Cranfield for the Treasurership, might have been selected on their own merits. \(^{38}\)

Buckingham’s longevity as favourite could not have been known when he first arrived at court. Finally espying an opportunity for greater advancement, Bacon shrewdly decided to attach himself to the “new-risen star.” He became Buckingham’s self-appointed advisor, writing a fairly lengthy letter to him in 1616 on how best to conduct himself in his unique role at court. Covering such diverse topics as religion, the Council board, foreign plantations and

\(^{37}\) Sir Anthony Weldon described Buckingham’s desire to marry “his Country kindred” as the favourite’s way of demonstrating his greatness by having “Kitchin-wenches married to Knights eldest sonnes” in forced matches. Weldon, 124-5.

\(^{38}\) Sir Henry Yelverton, whom Buckingham initially opposed for Attorney-General in 1617, because he had not sought support from the favourite. Willson, James VI & I, 386; Buckingham put forward, first Cranfield, then Sir James Ley as candidates to replace Bacon as Lord Keeper in 1621, only to have James reject both and choose John Williams, then Dean of Westminster. Roger Lockyer, Buckingham, 69-70; James’ 1619 selection of Sir George Calvert as Secretary of State was dramatized by the favourite’s abandoning his two candidates in order to claim Calvert’s nomination as his own. Ibid., 69.
trade, Bacon attempted to formalize his new patron's role as an informal executive advisor. Taking care not to foul the king's intentions, Bacon wrote of a favourite's precarious condition as a highly visible mediator between subjects and king. He stated that if "either he (the king) commit an error and is loath to avow it,...or you commit the fault,... perhaps you may be offered as a sacrifice to appease the multitude." Believing his pupil to have no desire to serve as a "sin offering," Bacon followed this warning with specific instructions on how he might avoid such a predicament. According to Bacon the key to success resided in the favourite's ability to render good service for the crown as well as maintaining the king's affections. To serve adequately he would have to provide good counsel on matters of state and efficiently manage royal patronage. The opening segment of the letter was devoted to the construction of a system for addressing suits and dispensing patronage. Bacon presented the business of state as eight separate categories of statecraft; however, each of these sections returned to the selection of officers to effectively administer the kingdom. His reason for emphasizing patronage with Buckingham originated from the common perception that the favourite already determined the fate of all suits.

Sir Francis Bacon to Viscount Villiers, and Baron Waddon, 1616, Bacon, The Letters, vol. 6, 14.
It is true that the whole Kingdom hath cast their eye upon you, as the new rising Star, and no man thinks his business can prosper at Court, unless he hath you for his good Angel, or at least that you be not a Malus Genius against him.⁴⁰

Bacon urged Buckingham to schedule regular hours every week for receiving suitors, organizing and examining their drafted proposals, meeting with a small group of "referees" (appointed by Buckingham) to peruse these bids separately, and finally, studying the referees' recommendation to adjudge the worthiness of each petition. These proposals were not novel ideas. A similarly organized system for considering petitions had been in place under Salisbury and Northampton, who had established a council committee to examine suits and submit recommendations. Systematizing patronage in this way, Bacon argued, would legitimize and bring impartiality to a process that was often characterized as partisan.

Bacon advised his prospective patron to consider merit over birth, and choose capable lawyers and privy councillors to assist him in managing the king’s affairs. He acknowledged the pressure great magnates could bring upon this process. To alleviate some of this pressure, yet still maintain competence in key offices he advised:

Although to some persons of great birth, the place of Princes Councilors may be bestowed as an honour unto

⁴⁰Ibid., 15.
them, yet generally the motive should be the Parts of the man and not his Person.41

Buckingham observed some of Bacon’s instructions pertaining to scheduled appointments with suitors, as well as learning to serve the king with more than flattery, something none of his predecessors had accomplished. Had the duke completely followed his mentor’s advice, he could not have delivered so magnanimously for his extended family nor his supporters at court. Furthermore, the appointment of referees to judge the validity of petitions would have diminished the impression that he, and he alone, was the broker of the royal bounty. Buckingham clearly valued this role. It produced tangible benefits, and his mastery of it was sustained by holding James’ favour.

Although the duke dominated affairs at court during the last eight years of James’ reign, he had little influence on royal policy. As noted earlier virtually all of his candidates for higher office were defeated. Furthermore, he lacked interest in most of the political issues that confronted Jacobean governments in the early years of his tenure. Buckingham echoed the king’s views on foreign policy, rarely attended Privy Council meetings, and he showed little concern for religious affairs prior to meeting

41Ibid., 20.
William Laud in 1622. Although his influence on both religious and political developments greatly increased under Charles, Buckingham had little involvement in policymaking while James remained in power.

Buckingham’s reputation both inside and outside the Jacobean court was that he epitomized the corrupting influence brought to Whitehall by many of the individuals James favoured. The reports of indulgent extravagance, sexual promiscuity, besotted revelry and the connection of these excesses to financial corruption clung fast to Buckingham. The fact that he was often connected to bribery scandals did nothing to quell this gossip. Officeholders had long been accustomed to offering “gifts” as a way of sealing an agreement with the king, but during Buckingham’s ascendancy the increasing size of these bribes angered competing candidates and parliament. The fact that Buckingham used this income to supplement crown revenue brought neither sympathy with James’ financial plight, nor did it diminish the impression that bribes allowed the duke to fill his own pockets along with those of his clients. So why did he not suffer the disgrace of impeachment as did Bacon, Cranfield or Sir Giles Mompesson? The answer - this

42He also began vigorously advocating war with Spain in 1624, but this merely yielded several minor mercenary expeditions.
favourite was well connected in both houses of parliament. After he and Prince Charles returned from their aborted diplomatic mission in 1623, Buckingham was even honored by the lords and commons with a memorial to “render unto him all possible thanks for” his “fidelity and industry...in this negotiation (Spanish treaty).” Shortly after this grand event, parliament brought corruption charges against the duke’s former client Lord Treasurer Lionel Cranfield, the Earl of Middlesex.

Ironically, the one successful administrative initiative Buckingham led as Lord Admiral was reform of the corrupt procurement practices in shipbuilding. Yet even this accomplishment brought objections by many of the parties who profited under the old system, and had connections in parliament. When Buckingham and Cranfield parted ways over war with Spain in 1624, the duke decided to

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43 Many parliamentarians were either current clients of Buckingham, seeking his patronage, or related by marriage (e.g. Sir Edward Coke). Those rejected for office by the duke, such as Sir Thomas Wentworth, were fewer in number and understandably feared his vindictiveness against opponents. For summaries of correspondence between Wentworth and Buckingham regarding the former’s competition with Sir John Savile over the Custos-ship see Buckingham to Wentworth, 5 September 1617, Wentworth Papers, 1597-1628, ed. J. P. Cooper (Publication of the Camden Fourth Series for the Royal Historical Society, vol. 12. London: Butler & Tanner Ltd., 1973), 99; Buckingham to Wentworth, 23 September 1617, Ibid., 103.

44 Cobbet, 1400.

45 In terms of productivity and efficiency these reforms were incredibly successful, since yards were able to produce two new ships and refit two older vessels. Prior to a 1618 commission for naval reform, led by Lionel Cranfield, shipyards delivered half this number. See Peck, Court Patronage and Corruption, 106-7.
aid parliament's prosecution of his former client and the king's most successful Lord Treasurer.\textsuperscript{46} Despite Cranfield's efforts to reduce corruption, bribery and embezzlement continued at all levels of government. With information and witnesses - likely produced by Buckingham - parliament's impeachment case against the Lord Treasurer was not difficult to prove. Cranfield payed the price for opposing his former patron by being banned from court and all future office, fined 50,000l., deprived of his estate at Chelsea House and committed to the Tower. By all indications James regretted this outcome and opposed the duke's use of parliamentary impeachment to depose Cranfield.\textsuperscript{47} The king, discerning that such a device might be used to topple any of his ministers, thereby diminishing the value of royal protection, warned Buckingham that he "was making a rod for his own breech."\textsuperscript{48}

For historians, James' words appear quite prophetic; however, up to the point of the first Stuart king's death John Chamberlain's assessment seemed the more accurate. Comparing the fate of Sir Henry Yelverton, the former

\textsuperscript{46}Cranfield, by then made earl of Middlesex, stated to the House of Lords that he believed the entire trial to be "a dangerous plot, conspiracy, and combination against him." Cobbett, 1412.

\textsuperscript{47}James appreciated Middlesex's efforts to improve royal finances, but the king believed his treasurer's austere measures made enemies. "All Treasurers, if they do good service to their master, must be generally hated." Lockyer, James VI & I, 95.

attorney general consigned to the Tower in 1621, with that of Buckingham and his brother Edward, Chamberlain wrote:

Thus we see that great men weakly opposed thereby become the stronger; and it is no small comfort to him (Buckingham) and his (as he professes) that he is found Parliament-proof.49

Yelverton’s testimony that he was “the weakest among many” raised Buckingham’s role as orchestrator of a corrupt system for assigning patents to paying clients. The favourite skillfully maneuvered his way through these hearings, finally allowing Yelverton to damage his own credibility by impugning the king’s honour with a comparison of James to an incompetent monarch (Edward II), duped by cleverer favourites.50

Although Buckingham temporarily proved himself “Parliament-proof,” his scheme to eliminate adversaries by impeachment exposed far too many officers of the court. The ignominy these scandals brought to the court must not be understated. While talk of graft and corruption at the Jacobean court existed throughout James’ reign, Parliament, as a court of record, verified these rumors as facts that threatened the legitimacy of the royal government. The outcome of these proceedings permanently damaged the reputation of James and Buckingham. The duke’s political

49 Chamberlain to Carleton, 5 May 1621, Chamberlain Letters, 257.

50 As Attorney General, it is curious that Yelverton could make such a blunder and discredit his testimony. See Cobbett, 1255-58.
power was constantly challenged during the early years of Charles' reign, while the former reign would be remembered by historians as a period with unprecedented corruption at court.

This idea that James had a tendency to appoint corrupt individuals who harmed the country was perpetuated by historians. A powerful example is Samuel Gardiner:

> Everything to which James put his hand was marred in the execution. His own life was virtuous and upright. But he contrived to surround himself with those who were neither virtuous nor upright.  

However, a recent study on Jacobean patronage and corruption allegations does not simply impugn the integrity of James and his ministers. Instead, Linda Levy Peck presents a more complex analysis of patron/client problems in early Stuart England. She argues that structural forces created dysfunctions in Jacobean court patronage networks, and these dysfunctions were the reason for widespread dissatisfaction with the Jacobean political system. As a result, these dysfunctions combined with unorthodox revenue collection strategies led to corruption charges becoming a chronic complaint against James' court. Key to her analysis is the trend, which began under Elizabeth, of national government's centralization of patronage. This trend narrowed

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opportunities for elite advancement, while the ranks of those seeking favor simultaneously swelled. This situation was noted by contemporaries and libelous pamphleteers.

In the wake of Elizabeth’s parsimonious style, James’ extravagant court and liberality towards his ministers and favourites seemed excessive. The king professed his concern that “Liberalitie would decline to Prodigalitie,” but he feared more the vice of “extreame niggardnesse.” Perhaps “the sale of offices and titles was a rational means of raising money,” as Peck argues, but the perceived beneficiaries were courtiers, favourites and powerful officials, not the king. Undoubtedly, the impression that royal/public funds were being improperly collected and

53 Linda Levy Peck, “Corruption at the Court,” in After the Reformation, Malament, 77-78.

54 Weldon contemptuously opined that “where men were rich, there fines without reservation of rent; where poor,...there pensions.” Weldon, 120. In Nicholas Breton’s satire “The Court and Country,” the country-man observed of the courtiers life: “I fear the place you live in is more costly than profitable; where, for one that goes up the weather a number go down the wind, and perhaps the place not so truly full of delight as the passage through a meaner compass.” Nicholas Breton, “The Court and Country,” in Complaint and Reform in England, 1436-1714, ed. William Huse Dunham, Jr. and Stanley Pargellis (New York: Octagon Books, Inc., 1968), 458.

55 King James I, Basilicon Doron, in Political Writings, Sommerville, 48, 44.

56 Linda Levy Peck, “‘For a King not to be bountiful were a fault:’ Perspectives on Court Patronage in Early Stuart England,” Journal of British Studies 25 (1986): 57; Maurice Lee, Great Britain’s Solomon, 152-3.
diverted into private hands made Parliament more willing to investigate corruption allegations.

Early modern historians have found the concept of corruption difficult to define in terms that help us clearly understand what it meant in its historical context. Social scientists, economists and historians alike endeavor to determine both the causes of corruption and the sources for protest against it. Robert Harding notes the problem that living in modern times poses for scholars of this topic:

...our modern conception of corruption tends to foreclose discussion of the subject in early modern European states. This is because we define corruption as subversion of the public interest or of the principles of conduct implicit in the idea of public office."57

Given the prevalence of bribery, graft, the sale of offices, etc. in this period, some scholars have taken a "value-free" approach to assessing the costs of these practices in an economy. By interpreting corruption as merely the participation of public officials in the free market, officeholders could be viewed as a type of entrepreneur, seeking to secure their interests and maximize profits. The error in this line of reasoning, according to Harding, is its inability to determine a concept of propriety concerning patronage. Since the current idea of public service did not

exist in the seventeenth century, the challenge is in discovering the rules or boundaries that governed the behavior of public officials.

The fact that allegations of political corruption existed before, during and after James' reign suggests that general cynicism regarding officials' conduct spanned several generations in England. Of course the prevalence of corruption and persistent public cynicism could indicate that many people considered this behavior as normal for the period's political culture. Joel Hurstfield compares the "gifts" or informal fees required for services to tips in modern restaurants. Since everyone "tipped" public officials, they were neither corrupted nor biased in performing their duties. The problem with this analogy is that tips in a restaurant are not illegal. Complaints about abuses of office were not just a vague charge leveled by opposing factions. After all, Parliament found sufficient evidence to convict Yelverton, Bacon and Cranfield for specific crimes, namely, bribery and extortion. The activities of James' ministers were not unprecedented, but the excessive increases in "fees" and "gifts" surpassed an

58 Elizabeth lamented the moral state of the kingdom in her last days when she stated to William Lambarde that "hardly a faithful or virtuous man may be found." Hurstfield, 137.

59 Hurstfield holds that gifts augmented salaries and ensured good service, the corruptive element in Jacobean patronage was favoritism for certain clients. Ibid., 151-2.
invisible threshold of tolerance for these illicit practices.

Frustration with a government that pushed such practices to an extreme limit and a court that unwittingly gave rise to perceived favoritism were the reasons for Parliament's impeachment campaign. Furthermore, James' indiscriminate sale of honors threatened the status of the governing class. He granted knighthoods as a wholesale commodity, four hundred thirty two on one occasion alone. This method of raising revenue undermined his standing in the House of Lords and made bestowal of honors for service illegitimate. When considered this way, the Jacobean political/patronage structure was too liberal for England's traditional political class, yet too narrow for ambitious newcomers.
CHAPTER V
COURT SPECTACLE AND PUBLIC PERCEPTION

The Jacobean court’s reputation suffers from the selective recall of historians and literary critics who concentrate on James’ poor manners, corruption, scandals involving favourites and literature that mocked some aspects of the court. Scholars often neglect the court’s role in supporting artistic innovations and providing a positive vision for the kingdom’s future. This chapter describes how the king’s view of his reign was communicated through court culture, and analyzes some of the popular media reactions to the period’s court life.

Contemporary accounts of James’ and his family’s journey towards their new kingdom in 1603, mention numerous magnificent events along the way. These accounts usually include two common observations of these occasions: extravagant pageantry and large, adoring crowds. In terms of ostentatious expenditure; however, James’ coronation was somewhat subdued. The reduced scale of the king’s coronation owed to the fact that he issued a proclamation requesting a modest ceremony out of consideration for public health, as the months preceding his arrival witnessed a
virulent outbreak of the plague.\textsuperscript{1} Despite the tragedy that preceded the occasion, the people happily greeted their new monarch.

Well here he is. Happily planted and heartily welcome! What wants then but his blessed coronation! At which was no small triumph. For had you seen him in progress to it, as many did, when he took barge at Whitehall, on Saint James's day (25\textsuperscript{th} July); such was his salutation to the people, and theirs to him.\textsuperscript{2}

Eventually the people of London were treated to a splendid show, with "the city and suburbs being one great pageant," for James' inaugural Parliament the following year.\textsuperscript{3} People were so eager to catch a glimpse of their new ruler that the constant pushing and maneuvering for position caused injury to some onlookers. The enormous crowds present for these occasions made the king quite anxious, since large crowds in Edinburgh usually signaled some sort of trouble. Though relatively peaceful, the grasping crowds in London agitated James; he plainly disliked being on display through long ceremonies. Sir John Oglander observed the king's irritation on such occasions: "as he would passionately swear and ask [his attendants] what the people would have of him. They would answer they came out of love to see him.

\textsuperscript{1}There were approximately 30,000 London plague deaths in 1603. Larkin and Hughes, vol. 1, 37.


\textsuperscript{3}Aikin, vol. 1, 183.
Then he would cry out in Scottish, 'God’s wounds! I will pull down my breeches and they shall also see my arse.'

Despite his frustration with grand public ceremonies, James understood the importance of managing his public image. He may not have enjoyed being the object of commoners’ curiosity, but he showed patience by enduring these activities all the same. While in Scotland James considered how a monarch’s dress, crown, scepter and position of the throne physically defined their relationship with subjects. Based on this exalted imagery, he claimed that monarchs were a kind of “little god” whose appearance might inspire awe, respect, adoration, loyalty – curiosity was not far removed from these sentiments. If indeed the people scrutinized royalty, whether out of curiosity, love or something more devious, then monarchs must moderate their behavior accordingly. He advised his son Henry:

...for Kings being publike persons, by reason of their office and authority, are as it were set upon a publike stage, in the sight of all the people; where all the beholders eyes are attentively bent to looke and pry in the least circumstance of their secretest drifts: Which should make Kings the more carefull not to harbour the secretest thought in their minde, but such as in the owne time they shall not be ashamed openly to avouch.

James’ description of kings as “set upon a publike stage”

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5 King James I, Basilicon Doron, in Political Writings, Sommerville, 4.
provides historians with a useful metaphor for analyzing Jacobean life at court, especially its own artistic and social milieu. Although court was not a scripted production, reports of its social functions and artistic environment presented observers with drama, engaging characters, plot twists, intrigue, and occasionally scandal.

The king had substantial resources with which to articulate his vision of Jacobean ideals and virtues to subjects throughout his realm. James showed a keen sense of how to use propaganda either to promote his position on an issue, or define the nature of his kingship. Two of his earliest proclamations after claiming his title in 1603, addressed high priority issues: 1) to affirm his claim as rightful sovereign to the crown of England (France and Ireland also listed); 2) establish the union of England and Scotland. The king's claim to title was never challenged in England, but his proposal for uniting the kingdoms became quite controversial. The initial proclamation regarding the union called on the Parliaments of both countries to consider the matter, yet the document's primary function was to "make known to all those to whose knowledge these Presents shall come." After his first Parliament refused

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6Larkin and Hughes, vol. 1, 1-3.
7Ibid., 18-9.
8Ibid.
to proceed with union legislation, he issued proclamations giving himself the royal style "King of Great Brittaine," to be expressed on all coins and future proclamations.\(^9\)

Furthermore, he ordered all English and Scottish ships to fly a new flag that combined the crosses of St. George and St. Andrew.\(^10\) Historians attribute James' use of proclamations on this issue as either an attempt at economic union, or a by-pass of Parliament's legislative role in the matter.\(^11\) Since he considered himself the de facto "King of Brittaine," he merely needed legal recognition of this state.\(^12\) However, James did not abandon hope until 1607 that Parliament could be persuaded to enact legislation recognizing some form of union - a full year after the last of these proclamations. These pronouncements are not evidence that the king abandoned his legislative goal or

\(^9\)Issued October 20, 1604. Ibid., 94-7.

\(^10\)This prototype of the Union Jack immediately became an object of controversy as the Council in Scotland protested that the cross of St. Andrew was twice divided by that of St. George, which was superimposed on it. Proclamation issued April 12, 1606. Ibid., 135.

\(^11\)Andrew Nicholls maintains that having failed with the political union, James resorted to an economic union through a series of proclamations that ended tariffs between the two countries, improved coordination in shipping, and regulated currency values. Andrew Nicholls, The Jacobean Union: A Reconsideration of British Civil Policies Under the Early Stuarts (London: Greenwood Press, 1999), 149-51; Roger Lockyer contends that the king "blamed private interests, malice, and wilful obstruction for the Commons' reluctance." Therefore, he decided to achieve the same goal "by force of our kingly prerogative." Lockyer, James VI & I, 58.

\(^12\)It should be noted that James told Parliament that he did "not intend proclamashones to have force of lawe," but he used them "wherein the lawe hathe no provishon, untill a parleamente cane provide." Despite this distinction, he declared that "he is a trayterous subjecte that will saye a king maye not proclayme and bynd by it." Cobbet, 1156.
that he resorted to a less ambitious plan; rather, they reveal an attempt to create support for his most ambitious initiative as a ruler.

James' union proposal brought forward a difficult and surprising issue for the king: English attitudes towards Scots. Officially Parliament's opposition to the union was based on legal incongruities of the two kingdoms. However, debate on the floor often exposed the English bias against their northern neighbors. Sir Christopher Piggott's brief but dangerous invective included his depiction of Scots as "murderers, thieves," and "rogues." He continued: "They have not suffered above two kings to die in their beds, these 200 years. Our king hath hardly escaped them; they have attempted him."\(^{13}\) Although Piggott's choice of words lacked tact and prudence (for which he was committed to the Tower), he was not alone in his views. Nicholas Fuller, whom Robert Bowyer called "honest Nick," claimed that "Scots in other countreys were more like pedlars than marchants." John Hare used the term "beggarly Scots," while Sir William Morrice added "that they were first an ydolatrous nation, and worshipers of Divels."\(^{14}\)

These sentiments were further agitated by the

\(^{13}\)Piggott was referring to the Gowrie Plot of 1600. Ibid., 1097.

\(^{14}\)See Bowyer, 203-8.
predominance of Scotsmen in James’ bed-chamber. Weldon claimed this state of things produced a division at court between the king’s English advisors and Scottish gentlemen of the bed-chamber. The dispute went back and forth between English claims that “Scots would get all, and would begger the Kingdom,” and the Scots’ complaint that they were already quite poor themselves. According to Weldon, James attempted to defuse these exchanges with wit, answering to his fellow Scotsmen: “Content yourselves, I will shortly make the English as beggerly as you, and so end that controversie.”

Concerns that James was pouring money into Scottish coffers reached beyond Parliament and the court. Some of the pamphlets or tracts that circulated at this time suggest the public became aware of this issue, and predictably did not approve of the king’s preferment for his kinsmen. Clearly aware of these feelings, James explained his generosity before Parliament in 1610: 

It may be thought that I have given much amongst Scottishmen. Indeed if I had not beene liberall in rewarding some of my old servants of that Nation, ye could never have had reason to expect my thankfulness

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15Weldon, 52-3.

16“'The Scotchmen are but beggars yet, although their begging was not small. But now a Parliament doth sit, a subsidy shall pay for all.” Quoted in Pauline Croft, “Libels, Popular Literacy and Public Opinion in Early Modern England,” *Historical Research* 68 (1995): 277.
towards any of you that are more lately become my Subjects, if I had beene ingrate to the old.\textsuperscript{17}

Despite this speech, the continued presence of Scottish favourites, such as James Hay and Robert Carr, perpetuated the notion that foreigners were plundering the kingdom with the king’s consent. Years later the Carolinian poet John Cleiveland published his libel \textit{Satire on the Scots}, in which he derided them for living as nomadic trouble-makers in foreign lands. They did not take care “how to be drest, or lisp abroad....No, the Scots errant fight, and fight to eat....You scandal to the stock of verse - a race able to bring the gibbet (gallows) in disgrace!” James brought his Scots to England, and now, “Like Jews they spread and as infection fly, As if the devil had ubiquity.”\textsuperscript{18} Such abuse of his native country was both painful and surprising for the king. In his optimism, James hoped to unite the kingdoms both dynastically and in law, but more than speeches and proclamations were required to turn ancient prejudices.

James was cognizant of the importance of propaganda and symbolism. He repeatedly mentioned his descent from Henry VII to establish his place as a rightful king by divine


right. He also sought to convey a specific image for his reign by likening himself to well-known biblical and classical rulers. James was the righteous king David, the wise king Solomon, Constantine the Christian emperor, Augustus the grand patron and beautifier of his capital.\footnote{See King James I, King James I, Speech in Star Chamber, 20 June 1616, in King James VI and I, Political Writings, ed. Johann P. Sommerville (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 206-9; In a 1615 proclamation, James declared that he, the emperor of Britain, found London a city of "stickes, and left them of Bricke," whereas the first emperor of Rome, "found the city of Rome of Bricke, and left it of Marble." He considered this a more pragmatic goal, since brick was "farre more durable, safe from fire, beautiful and magnificent." Larkin and Hughes, 345-7.}

On the occasion of his accession, James commissioned a bezant, which depicted him kneeling at an altar with the four crowns of England, Scotland, France and Ireland laid about him. Its Latin inscription from Psalm 116, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits unto me?," added to the suggestion that he was the Christian emperor of Britain, seeking to render faithful service to God and his country.\footnote{Linda Levy Peck ed., The Mental World of the Jacobean Court (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 179.} Contrary to his traditional reputation as an absolutist who sought despotic rule, James portrayed himself as a benevolent king who ruled with the mutual trust and understanding of his subjects.

This imperial theme - associated with peace, prosperity and a dynastic union - drew upon classical, specifically Roman, culture for inspiration. James' writings and
speeches, replete with allusions to Roman rulers, poets, myth and law, reveal his affinity for Imperial Rome. Moreover, the culture of the early Roman Empire appealed to poets, playwrights, architects and painters throughout Europe as Baroque classicism became the dominant artistic influence of the seventeenth century. Early Stuart England marks a period in which the crown and members of the court embraced baroque culture so completely that, for example, architectural designs from the Jacobean and Carolinian periods bear little resemblance to those of the preceding Tudor dynasty. Although Tudor/Stuart artistic distinctions were less pronounced in literature and theatre, a change in court culture did in fact take place as well.

Malcolm Smuts’ valuable study of cultural developments at the early Stuart court identifies a trend toward an urban cosmopolitan and aristocratic court culture that seemed foreign, or “un-English,” to those outside courtly confines. This change had the long-term effect of alienating much of the rural population, and under James produced “an expression of deep mistrust of the transformations this trend was bringing about.”\(^{21}\) One manifestation of this mistrust was demonstrated by comparisons between Jacobean and Elizabethan courts which became common faire in early

\(^{21}\text{Smuts, 8.}\)
seventeenth-century English popular culture. These comparisons, highly unfavorable to James, constituted the beginning of an "Elizabethan Cult" which romanticized distinctive features of the virgin queen's reign.\(^{22}\) A popular ballad of early Stuart England, The Old Courtier of the Queen's, colorfully contrasts the "old" of the Elizabethan era with the "new" of James. The piece (see appendix A) presents popular nostalgic images for tradition, moderation, honor and wisdom as prevailing at the Elizabethan court. But these ideals were replaced by unprecedented lavishness, iniquity, greed and folly at James' court. Within his first year in England, the new king's court had already acquired a bawdy reputation for its atmosphere of extravagance, sexual deviance, drunkenness and political intrigue. On some occasions, this reputation was justified, but these characterizations resulted more from exaggeration of isolated events than regular life at court.

Reported evenings of drunken revelry at court owed much to wedding parties and celebrated visits by foreign guests. One such occasion was the summer of 1606 when Anne's brother Christian IV of Denmark came to call. Christian had not

\(^{22}\)Smuts adheres to the "country" vs. "court" dialectic in developing his thesis. As continental Baroque culture took hold at court, the urbaneness and extravagance of this new court became a target for disenfranchised groups whose power originated in the countryside. Elizabethan times were represented by themes of prudence, loyalty and tied to provincial landed society. Whereas James court was depicted as extravagant, immoral, filled with intrigue and rife with Spanish influence. Ibid., 18-28.
seen his sister since her 1589 marriage and departure for a new home in Scotland. This month-long reunion promised to be a joyous and spectacular affair, and court observers were not disappointed as Christian and his Danish entourage repeatedly bested their English counterparts in drinking stamina. During a four-day debauch at Cecil's Theobalds, Sir John Harrington recorded events at one evening's feast:

One day, a great feast was held, and, after dinner, the representation of Solomon his Temple and the coming of the Queen of Sheeba was made, or was meant to have been made,... The Lady did play the Queen's part, did carry precious gifts to their Majesties; but forgetting the steps arising, overset her caskets into his Danish Majesties lap, and fell at his feet though I rather think it was in his face.23

Such stories surrounding the Danish king's visit should not be surprising if his reputation as a heavy-drinker is taken into account. Although James drank regularly, he was not a drunkard. Despite a rumor that his choice of liquor had special potency, his physician Theodore Mayerne reported that the king preferred beer and sweet French wine, and did not seem to have a preference concerning its strength.24 Certainly James' belief that "Kings use oftt to eate publickly" helped encourage the banqueting and drinking for


24 Weldon wrote that James' "High Country wine, Tent wine, and Scottish Ale... were of that kind of strength that he had not had a very strong braine, might have daily been overtaken." Weldon, 166; Mayerne's view as a doctor was that James drank too much, but this was more a medical opinion than a social observation. Willson, King James VI and I, 194.
which his court was infamous.\textsuperscript{25} However, to his way of thinking these public meals allowed him to maintain a familiar relationship with the numerous guests, officials and sundry courtiers seeking his presence.

Famous for its extravagant balls and masques, the Jacobean court makes an apt theatre metaphor. James understood the position the court held in governing his kingdoms while it simultaneously served as a public setting to be viewed by the whole nation. The king intended the presentations at court to demonstrate his magnanimous character, but in some cases these entertainments were perceived by observers to be nothing more than a costly spectacle.\textsuperscript{26} Furthermore, James lacked personal propriety and a sense of decorum at such events which brought a farcical quality to several important occasions.\textsuperscript{27}

While the balls, masques, poetry readings and plays were principally court entertainment, their secondary function was to provide propaganda for crown policies and the king himself. The authors of these works required the

\textsuperscript{25}King James I, \emph{Basilicon Doron}, in \textit{Political Writings}, Sommerville, 50.


\textsuperscript{27}An example of James awkwardness at ceremonial events was his son in-law’s induction into the Knights of the Most Noble Order of the Garter. James conducted the ceremony from his bedside. Midway through someone observed that statutes stipulated that only knights could receive the Garter. Although Frederick had not been knighted, James decided to induct him anyway and knight him on another occasion. Akrigg, 145.
approval of their patrons in order to maintain their place as favoured artists. Being a court artist meant more than financial prosperity, other less tangible benefits included fame and the ability to experience a world that most people only imagined. This position of dependency did not necessarily corrupt the author’s total work, but it definitely limited what he could say to whom. For example, Ben Jonson’s well-known play Valpone, or the Fox, based on a depiction of Salisbury as a scheming, rapacious miser, may be indicative of the author’s attitude toward the secretary. However, the play was not an open attack on Salisbury and it seems unlikely that Jonson would have risked offending him, since the poet still received commissions from the king’s most powerful official. In this environment, the artistic work performed for court during this period represented the ideas and values that James desired to advance about himself and those about him.

More than any other art form, the masques of Jonson and the designer Inigo Jones exemplified the virtues, innovation, extravagance, frivolity and aesthetics of the

28Cecil commissioned Jonson to write speeches and poetry for the king. Curiously, Jonson also penned several epigrams to the secretary that described their similar positions as dependents upon their “wise king.” See Epigrammes 63 & 64, Ben Jonson, The Complete Poetry of Ben Jonson, ed. William B. Hunter Jr. (New York: New York University Press, 1963), 26-7; Most of Jonson’s work seems sycophantic today, but within the layered verse are subtle messages affirming the patron’s need for competent supporters (i.e. Jonson himself). Robert C. Evans, "Frozen Maneuvers: Ben Jonson’s Epigrams to Robert Cecil," Texas Studies in Literature and Language 29 (Spring 1987): 115-140.
Jacobean court. Described as "part masquerade ball, part drama and part pure pageantry," the masque was an entertaining display of singing, dancing and infrequent dialogue. Jones brought these performances to a new level of sophistication with the aid of Italian theatrical machinery to use with his spectacular set designs. Many people would have agreed with Bacon's assessment that "these things are but toys...yet, since princes will have such things, it is better they should be graced with elegance." Despite the genre's inherent constraint on spoken dialogue and elementary plot structure, Jonson and Jones raised the masque to its most complex form.

Although court masques mainly provided entertainment, they also honored the king by heralding his virtues and reinforcing his chosen values for the age. James believed his accession brought "him into the promised land," the beginning of the mission for which God had chosen him to rule. He hoped his reign would commence a period of unity, peace and prosperity, and that he be regarded as the unifier and peacemaker. These allusions to a deliverance into a new era of peace, and religious and social contentment, compared the kingdom to a type of paradise.

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29 Akrigg, Jacobean Pageant, 22.

30 Francis Bacon, "Of Masques and Triumphs," in The Essays of Francis Bacon (London: The Peter Pauper Press, Date N.A.), 150.

31 Tanner, 60.
wherein the Fall was reversed. The masque *The Golden Age Restored* represents the most explicit propaganda on this theme. According to Jonson’s script, the Golden Age was restored by Astraea’s return to again reign on earth, bringing justice to erase the memory of a plague of vices during the Iron Age. Pallas heralded Astraea’s return while describing times recent and the coming Golden Age:

> Now, now, descend, you both beloved of Jove,  
> And of the good on earth no less the love,  
> Descend, you long long wished and wanted pair,  
> And as your softer times divide the air,  
> So shake all clouds off with your golden hair,  
> For spite is spent: the Iron Age is fled,  
> And, with her power on earth, her name is dead.\(^{32}\)

Jonson described the Iron Age as a period of war against an “insolent rebellion,” which ended when the evils on earth had been defeated. Pallas, the virgin warrior, had won a great victory for “this happy isle,” allowing peace to prevail under a new and just ruler. Jonson’s allegory, as well as his selection of the archetypes Pallas and Astraea, represented with fiction significant political differences between Elizabethan and Jacobean England. Although *The Golden Age* praised the virgin warrior for her brave and virtuous accomplishments, the peaceful reign that followed was preferable as it has “become a heav’n on earth.”

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Court masques also were used to support the king's position on specific issues. Jonson's *Newes from the New World Discover'd in the Moone* exemplifies art shaped to defend royal policy. Presented early in 1620, *Newes from the New World* included commentary on voices critical of James' foreign policy. At this time Europe was immersed in conflicts which many feared would lead to a large-scale general war. This prelude to the Thirty Years War made "good copy" in many newspapers, mostly foreign imports from the Dutch Republic, as well as providing material for the pens of "Factors" of news. The king reacted to this new phenomenon of professional news-gathering by banning discussion of the Bohemia situation, and directing ministers to discontinue public prayers on the matter. Public commentary on such a sensitive topic clearly infringed on his royal prerogative; moreover, the "common people" did not have the ability to comprehend the mysteries of statecraft.

Aware of this situation, Jonson wrote his comic drama to assuage James' frustration and uphold the crown's wise policy. The masque begins with news heralds hyping their "Bold and brave news!," which was "New as the night they are

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33These papers were invariably critical of the king's desire to prevent escalation through negotiation with European Catholic powers Spain and Austria. Factors were essentially gossip columnists who posted hand-written bulletins. Paul R. Sellin, "The Politics of Ben Jonson's *Newes from the New World Discover'd in the Moone,*" *Viator* 17 (1986): 321-337.
born in — or the fant’sy that begot ‘em." The wonders of a new world on the moon, discovered with aid of "perplexive glasses" (telescope), becomes the latest item "made for the common people," who take "pleasure in believing of lies." Printers, chroniclers, factors and news heralds clamor to create "false newes" while their grotesque dances testify to the buffoonery of their business. The anti-masque used this moon of "lunatics" to ridicule Anabaptists, lawyers, Rosicrucians, tailors and fashions, and Pythagoreans — all groups that James found offensive. According to Jonson, the news of the day was motivated by greed, and its purveyors capable of any unethical contrivance to sell their "fant’sy." The final songs of the main masque resolve the problem of misinformation presented in the first part of the production. Truth and reliable knowledge may be discerned by discovering "the body whence they shine." A society based on "Truth" and proper "Virtues" must find knowledge "from the divine light," and be "led by that excellent likeness" to achieve "pure harmony." This masque demonstrates how Jacobean patronage effected vindication at

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36 Jonson does not leave the "excellent likeness" a mystery as the chorus finishes with: "Join then to tell his name, and say but James is he." The lines above are taken from the four songs that finish the masque. Ibid., 290-352.
court of policy that remained unpopular outside courtly confines.

The concept of a Golden Age of social harmony and civic virtue, led by a wise king, "symbolized a vision of the benevolent effects of royal power upon England."\(^{37}\) Jonson and Jones were tools of the court that articulated this vision. Their artistic innovations focused on the aesthetics of the masque rather than the essential message of these presentations. Stephen Orgel asserts that early-Stuart masques were an artistic form designed to express the monarch's political will. According to Orgel, these spectacles "provide us with a remarkable insight into the royal point of view, whereby the complexities of contemporary issues were resolved through idealizations and allegories, visions of Platonic realities."\(^{38}\) Bacon's view that these performances were little more than expensive "toys" was probably widespread outside Whitehall. However, considering their political content, and the time and energy expended in their production, masques were the supreme form of royal artistic expression at the Jacobean court.

James willingly played his kingly role attending the balls and masques at Whitehall, but his wife Anne delighted

\(^{37}\)Smuts, 254.

in such pageantry. Soon after they arrived in London, the royal couple were discovered to be "an huntinge kinge, a dauncinge queen." Anne's enthusiasm for theatrical entertainment is usually belittled, but she recognized artistic genius and promoted the careers of Ben Jonson and Inigo Jones. She secured both men to produce the Masque of Blackness (1604) which they presented for Christmas at Whitehall. The show itself was probably superb, but when the queen and her ladies appeared in scanty attire, her reputation with the public became tarnished. As Sir Dudley Carleton wrote to his friend: "Their apparel was rich but too light and courtesanlike for such great ones."³⁹ For a time after this debacle Anne stayed in the background of court productions, because she disliked the infamy her pageant brought. However, in 1608 she again ventured to produce a masque of her choice and continued presenting them for the next few years. Her son Henry's death in 1612 marked the end of Anne's participation in these theatrical performances.

Queen "Anna's" (she preferred Anna over Anne) influence at court is difficult to ascertain and continues to be debated among historians. She is often described as "dull and indolent," living "for pleasure as she passed her time moving from one of the palaces assigned to her to the

next." Roy Strong argues that "she deliberately avoided politics, devoting herself instead to dancing, court entertainments, and the design and decoration of her houses and gardens." Leeds Barroll counters such exaggerated depictions by arguing that Anne cleverly manipulated factions within the Scottish nobility in order to help shape the composition of that court. Barroll also claims that the queen's contributions to the artistic environment in the English court should not be underestimated, since it was she who recognized the talent and promoted the careers of many of the period's best artists. As a high-spirited, artistic, strikingly beautiful, and perhaps non-intellectual, queen Anna seems an odd fit with a philosopher king who disdained fashion. Yet with the exception of a few disputes over the guardianship of prince Henry, the couple

40 G. P. V. Akrigg also claims the queen was "interested in little that was more serious than matters of dress....her chief delight lay in court balls and masques." Akrigg, Jacobean Pageant 21-22.


42 Barroll holds that Anne aligned with Lennox, Mar, Bothwell and Lord Home to effect Chancellor Maitland's fall after the earl of Huntley’s slaying of the earl of Moray. Barroll neglects to mention that Moray had been intimate with Anne, and she believed the rumor that Maitland had been behind the killing. This point diminishes the idea that Anne’s motivation was a cunning political maneuver; rather, the queen seems to have opposed Maitland for personal reasons. Leeds Barroll, "The Court of the First Stuart Queen," in The Mental World, Peck, 191-208.

43 Besides Jonson and Jones, Anne supported the linguist John Florio (he tutored her in Italian), the painters Isaac Oliver and Paul van Somer, and several French musicians. Ibid., 207-8.
got along reasonably well.\textsuperscript{44} The queen’s premature death in 1619 greatly grieved James, and her passing marks a downturn in activity at court as the king sought the seclusion of Theobalds and other country estates.\textsuperscript{45}

English theatre away from Whitehall found the activities and personalities at court fascinating. Early in James’ reign a few plays received public attention for dramatizing court life and events associated with the realm’s first Scottish king. Most everyone is familiar with Shakespeare’s \textit{Macbeth} and the influence that several near tragedies had upon the “Scottish play.”\textsuperscript{46} Pauline Croft also points out the similarities between Robert Cecil and the playwright’s depiction of Richard of Gloucester in \textit{Richard III}. She notes there is “a striking chronological relationship between Cecil’s career and the popularity of

\textsuperscript{44}After James set out for England in 1603, Anne demanded the earl of Mar, the appointed guardian of prince Henry, to give her custody of her eldest son. The king ended the dispute with a letter to his wife, acceding to her demand that Henry accompany her on her journey southward. See King James I to Queen Anne, May 1603, Akrigg, ed., \textit{The Letters}, 213-5.

\textsuperscript{45}James personally wrote to Christian IV, informing him of his sister’s death. King James I to Christian IV, 2 March 1619, Ibid., 369-70.

\textsuperscript{46}These events consist of: 1) James struggles with the earl of Bothwell, who was accused of consulting witches to raise a storm while the king was en route from Denmark with his bride Anne in 1590; 2) the previously mentioned Gowrie Plot of 5 August 1600, which James made an annual day of national thanksgiving, and had special sermons preached at court every Tuesday to commemorate his deliverance; 3) the Gunpowder Plot of 5 November 1605.
the histories and stage plays of Richard III." In fact, Shakespeare's *Richard III* opened in 1591, the same year Cecil took oath as a privy councillor. The play was reprinted and performed recurrently until 1612, the year of his death. This may be a simple coincidence, but the anonymous pamphlets maligning his character by using his physical deformities as a reflection of his corrupt soul were not coincidental. The parallel with Shakespeare's portrayal of *Richard III* is unmistakable. Croft believes these developments prove Jacobean England witnessed the appearance of an "active public opinion formed by the circulation of topical literary, dramatic, religious and parliamentary material." 48

Plays of this sort could be quite dangerous as proved by Jonson, John Chapman and John Marston with their satire on Scots *Eastward Ho* (1605), for which all three were committed to the Tower. John Chamberlain noted that a play on the Gowrie Plot "hath been twice represented by the King's players, with exceeding concourse of all sorts of people." Yet he cautioned "that it be thought unfit that princes should be played on the stage in their lifetime, I hear that some great Councillors are much displeased with

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48 Croft, "Reputation of Cecil," 47.
it, and so is thought shall be forbidden."49 Chamberlain's comment is curious in its implication that common representations of current people and events surrounding the royal court were unusual if not unprecedented. Despite the danger involved in such productions, the dramatic events as well as interesting and controversial characters at the Jacobean court provided great material for the period's writers.

Thomas Middleton's *A Game at Chess* (1624) is an example of how the political environment inspired popular artistic works, even to the point of providing the setting for a play. Following the failed marriage negotiations with Spain in 1623, speculation grew concerning England's possible participation in the continental war. Conditions seemed to favor English entry in 1624, considering the voices that advocated war gained newfound support from Buckingham and Prince Charles. Middleton's play surprised its contemporary observers at the Globe for its daring satire on the diplomatic game played out the previous year in Madrid. The play ridiculed many of the most prominent personalities engaged in this struggle: notably Buckingham, the former Spanish ambassador conde de Gondomar, conde de Olivares and even the pope. These characters were represented as chess

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pieces in a match between two houses, one white and one black, in which "Cheque-Mate [was] given to Vertues Foes."\textsuperscript{50} England's supposedly pacific relationship with Spain was shown to be political subterfuge that enabled the latter state's monarch to make a play for "universall Monarchie, which hee and his Disciples principally aime at."\textsuperscript{51} Middleton drew special attention to a rivalry between the black knight (presumably Olivares) and the white knight (Prince Charles). Considering the black knight's ability to simultaneously manipulate a variety of schemes, he seemed the more adept of the two at brinkmanship through the first four acts. At one point an assistant informed him, "Sir your plots discovered," to which he responded, "Which of the twenty thousand, nine hundreth threescore and five canst tell?"\textsuperscript{52} Although the black knight professed respect "for the Whit Knight, and this brave Duke (Buckingham)," he believed he had them deceived; however, in the end Charles revealed his gambit declaring, "I am an Arch-dissembler... and the game ours, wee give thee checke mate by discovery."\textsuperscript{53}

\textsuperscript{50}Thomas Middleton, \textit{A Game at Chess} (Cambridge: Chadwyck-Healey, 1994), pro. 1.

\textsuperscript{51}The black king's "Disciples" were invariably depicted as Jesuit agents, reveling in their personal vices (incest, sodomy, gluttony, adultery, etc.) and carrying out Catholicism's numerous Machiavellian machinations. Ibid., I: 56-7.

\textsuperscript{52}Ibid., III: 128-30.

\textsuperscript{53}Ibid., IV: 322-3; V: 343, 361-2.
During its nine-day run *A Game at Chess* packed nearly thirty thousand Londoners into the Globe before authorities closed it down, which made it the most prolific single run on the Jacobean stage. According to contemporary observers this play also was noteworthy as a theatrical sensation because it attracted "all sorts of people old and young, rich and poor, masters and servants, papists and puritans, wise men, etc., churchmen and statesmen." Even prominent figures at court such as Sir Henry Wotton and Sir Thomas Lake found their way to the theatre to see the scandalous new play. This widespread popularity is significant because the pronounced hispanophobia in *A Game at Chess* set it against the Crown’s official policy toward Spain. Most historians, including Margot Heinemann, attribute the play’s appeal to contemporary animus towards international Catholicism as well as all things Spanish. But Heinemann goes further by arguing that Middleton’s play had a long run because of chamberlain Pembroke’s patronage of the production. Why Pembroke? According to this thesis, the earl and Middleton collaborated with Puritan parliamentarians to produce a show that might agitate opposition to Buckingham by mocking him in a public

theatre. Thomas Cogswell rightly points out several flaws in Heinemann's interpretation. Principally, her thesis depends upon the assumption that Pembroke was the sole patron, and that he was using the play to barb Buckingham. Both of these points are problematic since evidence on the play's financing is lacking. Therefore Pembroke's role as Middleton's patron is impossible to ascertain. Furthermore, the playwright's treatment of Buckingham fell far short of the slander Heinemann claims occurred on the stage, and many scenes offered a flattering portrayal of the duke.

Popular portrayals of events or personalities at court were difficult for the crown to control. These media did not uniformly depict negative images of the court, but their productions took place independent from royal patronage. Thus they usually failed to suggest the ideals and virtues that James preferred to promote as acceptable images of his court. However, the king's occasional displeasure with the popular media never led to a comprehensive, systematic censorship of all printed or artistic speech. Despite contrary claims by some Civil War historians, James did not embark upon a campaign, perpetuated by Charles, to "suppress all criticism." Instead he singled out, what he


56 Godfrey Davies cites 1623 as the year the crown began to persecute the booktrade for its distribution of controversial and politically seditious material. Godfrey Davies, "English Political
considered, "lavish and licentious speech of matters of State" as a freedom not "fit to be suffered." But it was not until December 1620, in the turbulent aftermath of his son-in-law Frederick's defeat at Prague, that a proclamation to this effect was issued.\textsuperscript{57} James' reaction to unchecked political speech in this case was more than royal indignation with presumptuous subjects. He hoped to halt a popular campaign for a war he desperately sought to avoid.\textsuperscript{58}

Early-modern English folk did not expect free expression regarding ecclesiastical or political matters. When parliamentarians asked the king for free speech, they made this request as a privilege of their office, not as a right of common citizens. However, the most recent research on the Jacobean government's approach to regulating and censoring printers reveals a regime that favored civic self-restraint over state repression. Sheila Lambert's essays on this topic further demonstrate James' moderation and relative tolerance as a monarch. She contends that government censorship never attempted to eliminate

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\textsuperscript{57}Larkin and Hughes, 495.

\textsuperscript{58}This attempt to quell political speech was apparently ineffective. The crown put forth a similar proclamation 10 months later which expressed "Our High displeasure;...that notwithstanding the strictness of Our commandement, the inordinate libertie of unreverent speech...doth dayly more and more increase." Ibid., 519-20.
criticism; rather, a form of "self-censorship" was practiced by writers, and, more importantly, the licensed printers of the Stationers' Company. Key to Lambert's thesis is her interpretation of a 1623 proclamation concerning printers, which reaffirmed the jurisdiction of the courts of the Star Chamber and High Commission in prosecuting cases concerning "the disorderly printing and selling of books." Although the king was concerned about the proliferation of unsanctioned literature, the primary objective for this proclamation was to reinforce the monopoly status of the Stationers' Company. To the extent that James used government coercion to control speech, he did so to maintain an existing patronage structure that by the end of his reign had begun to deteriorate.

Another important element of James' style of kingship was the prominence of male favorites at court and sometimes in administration of the kingdoms. Nothing about James has

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59 This 1623 proclamation invoked rules governing the book trade from a 1586 Star Chamber decree, and charged the Stationers' Company with finding the source of "sundry seditious, schismaticall, and scandalous Bookes and Pamphlets." Larkin and Hughes, 583-4; The Elizabethan decree replaced "sundry decrees and ordinances" with a standard set of rules to guide printers, bookbinders and booksellers. It also empowered the Stationers' Company with investigative policing authority concerning abuses and discovery of unlicenced operations. Elton, 179-84.

invited more speculation by historians than his sexual orientation and activities. Clearly James preferred to spend time with men, and if he became fond of them some form of favour inevitably followed. The king’s gifts ranged from fine clothing to appropriating an estate for the more fortunate. To become a favorite of James, a man needed good looks and either chance or ambition to gain the king’s attention. Robert Carr caught James’ eye merely by falling off his horse and breaking his leg in the field, whereas George Villiers’ charismatic appeal won James over.

Was the king’s preference for comely men really a manifestation of overt homosexual desire? His immoderate public displays of affection toward his male companions indicates a high level of intimacy, but actual evidence of James engaging in a sex act with these men does not exist. Furthermore, James listed sodomy with witchcraft, murder, incest, poisoning and counterfeiting as “horrible crimes that yee are bound in conscience never to forgive.”

Current histories generally explain James’ sexuality in two ways. The first interpretation suggests the king was a practicing homosexual with at least Buckingham and perhaps early in life with his cousin Esme Stuart. A second

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61 King James I, *Basilikon Doron*, in Political Writings, Sommerville, 23.

62 "Although he married and sired a number of children, James found his principal emotional - and conceivably sexual - fulfilment in handsome young men with fine French manners, on whom he lavished not only affection but money, places and titles." Lockyer, *James VI & I*, 12.
explanation for James' behavior is that he was either a latent homosexual or as Lee asserts, the king "was one of those people...who are simply not much interested in physical sex at all."63

Curiously, James' sexual proclivities caused less uneasiness with his contemporaries than it has with some twentieth-century historians, who hold that "it reveals a loosening of his moral fibre."64 The king's relationships with these young men, although uncommon, were not viewed as the scandalizing affairs that historians occasionally intimate. Bacon claimed that "it is no new thing for Kings and Princes to have their privadoes, their favourites, their friends."65 Distress about James' favourites focused less on the private aspects of these relationships than the influence these men had with the king. Although they did not usually acquire high offices or influence major political issues, the prominence of favourites at court and their pull regarding patronage combined with their sexual role to produce a fear that their presence contaminated the court.

James' desire to be perceived as a wise king leading his people into a golden age was undermined by the public's

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63 Lee, Great Britain's Solomon, 249.
64 Willson, King James VI and I, 337.
65 Francis Bacon, The Letters of Bacon, vol. 4, 14.
perception of the court. Indeed, many people outside the king’s presence viewed court very differently from the idealization presented in Jonson’s and Jones’ masques. The distinctive environment of the court contrasted to “country” mores in a way that suggested two antithetical societies within the realm. Numerous observers denounced court as rife with corruption, deceit, greed, foolery, extravagance and other myriad vices. Even the king’s chosen poet/minister John Donne described it as a place where “Vice prosper best,” and because of their familiarity with greatness “men put off the feare and Knowledge of God.”

Conversely, gentlemen and ladies from the country were praised for preserving a simple, sober, prudent and virtuous way of life that appealed to traditional English values. The best example of this court versus country dialectic is Nicholas Breton’s *The Court and Country* (1618). Breton’s tract, a fictional dialogue between a courtier and a country-man, reveals the sharp differences between the two men’s worlds. From fashion and food to religion and the nature of womenfolk, the values that shaped these worlds suggests a deep cultural divide between those who lived in the country and those who resided at court.

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67 Breton, 456-80.
Finally, it is important to note that criticism of the court did not equal criticism of the king. Whether a popular ballad such as The Old Courtier, libelous tracts, common plays, or Donne’s writings, the target for complaints were those people about the king. Although some compelling works cite this “cultural alienation” as contributing to “growing political alienation of the ‘court’ from the ‘country,’” the evidence does not suggest a link between rural values and anti-royalist sentiment. Breton’s country-man spoke of rural patriotism in this regard by declaring, “though we see not our sovereign every day, yet we pray for him every hour; and holding ourselves unworthy of his presence, are glad when we may get a sight of his majesty.”

After James had ruled England more than a decade, his pacific ideals, preference for continental art forms and personal manner of governing helped establish the character of the Jacobean reign. However, the public’s perception of their king’s court included more than his ideals and artistic choices. Malcolm Smuts describes the Jacobean court as “an institution with a distinct nucleus but a

68 See Stone, 86.

69 The country-man added that as rural subjects vowed to be true to God and obedient to His word, so they pledged “to be true to their king in the loyalty of their hearts.” Breton, 459, 471.
vaguely defined periphery."\textsuperscript{70} His description emphasizes the relatively easy access to the court for the nobility and greater gentry, who came seeking audience and favour from a small number of people lead by the king himself. This openness of the court with the nation's aristocracy facilitated the spread of continental baroque culture throughout England. It also meant that observations of court activities had a fluid nature, which allowed some of the iconoclastic critiques recently discussed.

Returning to James' metaphor of kings as "set upon a publike stage," it is difficult to ascertain with certainty exactly what the public thought of the image of the Jacobean court. For one thing, the court presented mixed images of itself to its audience. The official product the king hoped would be embraced by the public - Jonson's "Golden Age" and Solomon's court - was probably not accepted in full by his subjects. Yet it is also untrue that everyone away from court altogether adopted the cynical views expressed in the popular media. For one thing, satire is more than a political or social statement that elicits laughter. It is also an exaggeration. People may have enjoyed laughing at high society and its politics, but their response to these exaggerations are not accurate measures of public opinion. The public's appraisal of the Jacobean court was similar to

\textsuperscript{70}Smuts, 4.
other aspects of James' reign: a mixture of good and bad. Fortunately for James, most of the negative images of courtiers and court life did not render him a bad king.
CHAPTER VI
CONCLUSION

In the proclamation calling for his first Parliament, James announced his contentment with all his new subjects and declared his intentions towards his "highest counsell." We well know that princes cannot yield more profitable proof to their people, then by redressing abuses,...and resolve with our loving subjects of all those things which may best establish the publicke good, ground uppon soe syncere an intent on our part, may be matched with a like integrytie on theirs.1

Seeking harmony and consensus, James consistently appealed to common concepts such as "the publicke good" and mutual sincerity. He hoped his people would respond to such initiatives in good faith, trusting their king to follow through on his pledges to safeguard their welfare. At times he succeeded in cultivating a spirit of goodwill and found ways to build consensus on difficult issues. The settlement made at the Hampton Court Conference and his governance of the church in general are good examples.

The suggestion by S. R. Gardiner, Wallace Notestein, and others, that James intended to rule England as an autocrat has not passed the scrutiny of current scholarship. James understood that his power was limited by his obligation to the coronation oath, statute law or the Common Law. In fact, he pledged to uphold the Common Law, sought

1Cobbet, 967.
to create a fixed record for it, and saw to its equitable enforcement throughout the realm.² Kenneth Fincham and Peter Lake observe that "personal contact and management were central to his style of kingship, yet James could overestimate the impact of his personality and arguments."³ Perhaps his estimation of his abilities was exaggerated, but Parliament rarely met him half way. He opened every Parliament with renewed calls for goodwill and reciprocity regarding legislation and supply on the one hand, and redressing grievances on the other. However, this thesis has demonstrated that James hoped to receive more cooperation than Parliament usually gave him, leading to his exasperation with a seemingly obstructive institution. The king’s demand that members delimit debate to the matters for which he called the session did not infringe upon Parliamentary privilege. Indeed his predecessor, Elizabeth I, had insisted that each member was free “to say yea or no to bills...with some short declaration of his reason therein,” but not “to frame a form of religion or a state of government as to their idle brains shall seem meetest.”⁴

James’ management of Parliament did not depart from some imagined, idyllic tradition, wherein members avoided

²King James I, Speech to Parliament, 21 March 1610, in Political Writings, Sommerville, 180; and King James I, Speech in Star Chamber, in Political Writings, Sommerville, 208-10.
³Fincham and Lake, 206.
⁴Elton, 267.
infringing upon the royal prerogative while the crown respected member privileges, and conflict was absent. Rather, Jacobean Parliamentary history represents the continuation of tension over issues surrounding prerogative and privilege. Despite rebuffs of his appeals for reconciliation, James never completely lost hope of repairing his relationship with the House of Commons.5 In 1621, James again asked Parliament to consider his viewpoint stating, "In my first coming I knew not the Laws and Customs of this Land;...and, it may be there was a Misunderstanding between us which bred an Abruption."6

The Jacobean court was unpopular for many reasons, but claims that James was being manipulated by sycophantic courtiers, his Scottish bedchamber and powerful favourites were the root of the court’s infamy. Whether accurate or not, the perception prevailed that the court and royal government had been corrupted by a perversion of the patronage system. This perception seriously undermined the credibility of James’ appointed officeholders as well as the reward system in general. Joel Hurstfield points out that

5The king even went so far as apologizing before Parliament for previous indiscretions concerning the sale of honors and his well-known prodigality, declaring, “Christmas and open tide is ended.” King James I, Speech to Parliament, 21 March 1610, in Political Writings, Sommerville, 197.

6Cobbet, 1180.
early modern states lacked any kind of objective standard (i.e. civil service exam) for assessing the competency of prospective civil servants. The Patronage system, which required good service from clients, was the only means available to assess competency and award promotion. When this system lost its presumption of legitimacy, people away from court assumed that beneficiaries of royal patronage prospered because of favoritism, not merit. However, it is important to remember that despite the damaging effect of corruption scandals, most of James’ ministers performed well in office. Middlesex’s efforts at fiscal reform yielded budget surpluses in 1619, 1621, and 1624 respectively. Lord Bacon and Pembroke were also staunch supporters of court reform, and even Buckingham proved an able administrator and diplomat. Mark Kishlansky states that “James I was blessed with able ministers, and his own easy-going habits of governing left them wide latitude.”

Jacobean court culture and its influence upon the period’s artistic environment are not widely recognized as distinct from the preceding reign. Indeed, a cursory glance at literary and art history texts would suggest that an “Elizabethan” age was followed by a “Carolinian” one,

7Hurstfield, 150.


without mentioning the twenty-three years that separated these two periods. Unfortunately for James, literary figures and architectural developments of his time are not associated with his reign. Donne, Jonson, Middleton, Fletcher, and Shakespeare are usually considered Elizabethans, with scant mention of the fact that the majority of their work was produced after the queen’s death. James should be credited for cultivating a court atmosphere that led to a reorientation of social values toward the Baroque culture dominating the continent during this period. Malcolm Smuts, who emphasizes the development of the Elizabethan Cult as a negative reaction to conspicuous consumption at the Jacobean court, also acknowledges the stimulus these changes in London provided for the arts throughout England. Painting, sculpture, architecture, literature and performance art all flourished in Jacobean times, whereas Elizabeth built no palaces, contracted no foreign artists nor musicians. James’ reputation as a spendthrift king may be deserved, but his reign commenced a period of unprecedented patronage for the arts in England.

James’ distrust of historians is often noted by his biographers. He feared how historians might render his legacy, particularly because he had seen his mother’s

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10 Smuts, 117-118.

11 Ibid., 16-17.
reputation disparaged in several different texts. David Willson claims that the king "was, in fact, a thin-skinned person, infinitely sensitive to what was said of him," and very concerned about his reputation. Perhaps Willson’s characterization of James’ paranoia in this regard is accurate, but then the king’s suspicion of historians has been validated in the centuries since his death. It is untrue that James loathed the profession of history. He both urged his son “to be well versed in authentick histories,” and encouraged Edmond Bolton’s proposal for an “academ roial” to foster the study of history and literature. The truth, until recently, was that historians have made themselves James’ enemy by retelling similarly biased versions of his reign as Sir Anthony Weldon propagated. It is not necessary for historians to overcome these distortions by serving as the king’s apologist; James’ record is not a bad one. If current and future historians dispassionately appraise his personal oddities, as well as credit the successes and discredit the failures of his reign, James’ chances of being regarded a good king are reasonably safe.

In the spring of 1625, James fell ill with a tertian

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12 Willson, King James VI and I, 234.

13 King James I, Basilicon Doron, in Political Writings, Sommerville, 46; see D. R. Woolf, The Idea of History in Early Stuart England (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 105.
ague, an intermittently high fever accompanied by convulsions every two or three days. After three weeks of suffering in this state, the king’s condition worsened dramatically with a terrible convolution. He asked to be attended by his bishop. Both Abbot and Lord Keeper Williams came to be with him in his last hours and administered the Eucharist. James expired at his palace of Theobalds on March 27, 1625, in his fifty-ninth year, after a reign in England of twenty two years. After the king’s passing, Sir Anthony Weldon offered an honest judgement of his reign:

In a word, he was such a King, I wish this Kingdom have never any worse, on the condition, not any better; for he lived in peace, dyed in peace, and left all his Kingdomes in a peaceable condition, with his owne Motto: Beati Pacifici.\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{14}Weldon, 175.
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CHRONOLOGY

1566 June 19 Birth of James Stuart in Edinburgh.
1567 July 24 Mary abdicates and James made King of Scotland. Earl of Moray appointed regent.
1578 Mar. Period of regency ends and James assumes power.
1582 Aug. Ruthven kidnaping by Gowrie conspirators.
1583 Sep. Death of George Buchanan.
1586 June James flees Gowrie.
1586 July Treaty between England and Scotland signed.
1589 James sails to Norway, marries Anne of Denmark.
1596 Aug. Princess Elizabeth born.
1598 James publishes The Trew Law of Free Monarchies.
1599 James finishes writing Basilicon Doron.
1604 Jan. Hampton Court Conference.
1605 Nov. Gunpowder Plot.
1606 Jan. Parliament passes bills against priests, recusants, etc.
1607 Nov. Bate's Case heard in Court of the Exchequer.
1608 May Salisbury appointed Lord Treasurer.
1609 May Henry IV of France Assassinated.
1610 June Negotiations in the House Commons proceed regarding the Great Contract.
1611 Apr. George Abbott appointed Archbishop of Canterbury.
1612 May Death of Robert Cecil, Earl of Salisbury.
1613 Sep. Thomas Overbury poisoned by Carr and Frances Howard.
1613 Nov. Robert Carr created Earl of Somerset.
       June  Death of Henry Howard, Earl of Northampton.
1616 Jan.  George Villiers made Master of the Horse.
       Nov.  Sir Edward Coke dismissed from the high court.
1617 Jan.  Villiers created Earl of Buckingham.
       Mar.  Francis Bacon appointed Lord Keeper.
1618 May  Defenestration of Prague.
       July  Suffolk dismissed as Lord Treasurer.
       Aug.  Frederick of Palatine elected king of Bohemia -
             beginning of Thirty Years War.
       Mar.  Death of Philip III of Spain.
       May  Impeachment of Chancellor Bacon.
       July  John Williams appointed as Lord Keeper.
       Sep.  Lionel Cranfield made Lord Treasurer.
       Sep.  Cranfield created Earl of Middlesex.
1623 Feb.-Sep. Prince Charles and Buckingham journey to
             Spain for marriage negotiations.
       May  Buckingham made Duke.
       May  Impeachment of Lord Treasurer, Middlesex.
       Dec.  Marriage treaty between Prince Charles and
             Henrietta Maria, sister of France's Louis XIII is
             ratified.
1625 Mar.  27  Death of James I.
APPENDIX A

THE OLD AND YOUNG COURTIER

An old song made by an aged old pate,
Of an old worshipful gentleman, who had
   a greate estate,
That kept a brave old house at a bountiful rate,
And an old porter to relieve the poor at his gate;
Like an old courtier of the queen’s,
And the queen’s old courtier.

With an old lady, whose anger one word asswages;
They every quarter paid their old servants their wages,
And never knew what belong’d to coachmen, footmen,
 nor pages,
But kept twenty old fellows with blue coats and badges;
   Like an old courtier, etc.

With an old study fill’d full of learned old books,
With an old reverend chaplain, you might know him
   by his looks.
With an old buttery hatch worn quite off the hooks,
And an old kitchen, that maintain’d half a dozen old
   cooks:
   Like an old courtier, etc.

With an old hall, hung about with pikes, guns, and
   bows,
With old swords, and bucklers, that had borne many
   shrewde blows,
And an old frize coat, to cover his worship’s trunk
   hose,
And a cup of old sherry, to comfort his copper nose;
   Like an old courtier, etc.

With a good old fashion, when Christmass was come,
To call in all his old neighbours with bagpipe and
   drum,
With good chear enough to furnish every old room,
And old liquor able to make a cat speak, and man dumb,
   Like an old courtier, etc.
With an old falconer, huntsman, and a kennel of hounds,
That never hawked, nor hunted, but in his own grounds,
Who, like a wise man, kept himself within his own bounds,
And when he dyed gave every child a thousand good pounds;
Like an old courtier, etc.

But to his eldest son his house and land he assign’d,
Charging him in his will to keep the old bountifull mind,
To be good to his old tenants, and to his neighbors be kind:
But in the ensuing ditty you shall hear how he was inclin’ed;
Like a young courtier of the king’s,
And the king’s young courtier.

Like a flourishing young gallant, newly come to his land,
Who keeps a brace of painted madams at his command,
And takes up a thousand pound upon his father’s land,
And gets drunk in a tavern, till he can neither go nor stand;
Like a young courtier, etc.

With a new-fangled lady, that is dainty, nice, and spare,
Who never knew what belong’d to good house-keeping, or care,
Who buyes gaudy-color’d fans to play with wanton air,
And seven or eight different dressings of other women’s hair;
Like a young courtier, etc.

With a new-fashion’d hall, built where the old one stood,
Hung round with new pictures, that do the poor no good,
With a fine marble chimney, wherein burns neither coal nor wood,
And a new smooth shovelboard, whereon no victuals ne’er stood;
Like a young courtier, etc.
With a new study, stuf full of pamphlets, and plays,
And a new chaplain, that swears faster than he prays,
With a new butchery hatch, that opens once in four
or five days,
And a new French cook, to devise fine kickshaws,
and toys;
Like a young courtier, etc.

With a new fashion, when Christmas is drawing on,
On a new journey to London straight we all must begone,
And leave none to keep house, but our new porter John,
Who relieves the poor with a thump on the back with
a stone;
Like a young courtier, etc.

With a new gentleman-usher, whose carriage is compleat,
With a new coachman, footmen, and pages to carry
up the meat,
With a waiting-gentlewoman, whose dressing is very
neat,
Who when her lady has din'd, lets the servants not eat;
Like a young courtier, etc.

With new titles of honour bought with his father's
old gold,
For which sundry of his ancestors old manors are sold;
And this is the course most of our new gallants hold,
Which makes that good house-keeping is now grown
so cold,
Among the young courtiers of the king,
Or the king's young courtiers.¹

APPENDIX B

SATIRE ON THE SCOTS

A land where one may pray with cursed intent,
Oh, may they never suffer banishment!
Had Cain been Scot, God would have chang’d his doom —
Not forc’d him wander, but confin’d him home.
Like Jews they spread and as infection fly,
As if the devil had ubiquity;
Hence ‘tis they live as rovers, and defy
This or that place, rags of geography;
They’re citizens o’ th’ world, they’re all in all;
Scotland’s a nation epidemical.
And yet they ramble not to learn the mode
How to be drest, or how to lisp abroad....
No, the Scots errant fight, and fight to eat;
Their ostrich-stomachs make their swords their meat;
Nature with Scots as tooth-drawers hath dealt,
Who use to string their teeth upon their belt....
Lord! what a godly thing is want of shirts!
How a Scotch stomach and no meat converts!
They wanted food and raiment; so they took
Religion for their seamstress and their cook.
Unmask them well, their honors and estate,
As well as conscience, are sophisticate.
Shrive but their title and their moneys poize,
A laird and twenty pence pronounc’d with noise,
When constru’d but for a plain yeoman go,
And a good sober twopence, and well so.
Hence, then, you proud imposters! get you gone,
You Picts in gentry and devotion,
You scandal to the stock of verse — a race
Able to bring the gibbet in disgrace!
Hyperbolus by suffering did traduce
The ostracism, and sham’d it out of use.
The Indian that heaven did forswear,
Because he heard some Spaniards were there,
Had he but known what Scots in hell had been,
He would, Erasmus-like, have hung between.
My muse hath done. A voyder for the nonce,
I wong the devil should I pick their bones;
That dish is his; for when the Scots decease,
Hell, like their nation, feeds on barnacles.
A Scot when from the gallow-tree got loose,
Drops into Styx, and turns a Soland goose.1

VITA

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