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978-0-521-79385-8 - King James VI and I and the Reunion of Christendom

W. B. Patterson

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On December 31, 1603, Jacques-Auguste de Thou, president of the Parlement of Paris and royal librarian to Henry IV of France, wrote a congratulatory letter to King James VI of Scotland who had recently ascended the English throne. De Thou's purpose, apart from celebrating the close joining of the French, Scottish, and English royal houses in James's lineage, was to present the monarch with a copy of his recently published book.¹ This was the first volume of the *Historia sui temporis*, a work which was soon to be regarded as one of the authoritative histories of the tumultuous events in France and Europe in the second half of the sixteenth century.² Henry IV, said de Thou, had urged him to send the British king a copy, and he had generously said that it should be inscribed to James. De Thou's letter specifically asked James, who was now cultivating new friendships and taking on new duties, to promote "the concord of the Church with common consent," rather than limiting himself to establishing peace within his own borders.³

Religious reconciliation, particularly in France, had long been one of de Thou's major concerns. Brought up and educated during the French religious wars, he had intended at one time to enter the priesthood of the Roman Catholic Church, but he had become, instead, a lawyer active in public life and had served as a counsellor to both Henry III and Henry

¹ Paris, BN MS. DuPuy 409, fol. 38; MS. Dupuy 632, fol. 2. De Thou evidently entrusted the delivery of the letter and the book to Christophe de Harlay, comte de Beaumont, the French ambassador in England. Beaumont reported on their favorable reception by the king in a letter to de Thou on March 10, 1604. MS. Dupuy 632, fols. 5–5 verso.

² James W. Thompson, *A History of Historical Writing*, 2 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1942), vol. I, pp. 569–570; A. G. Dickens and John M. Tonkin, *The Reformation in Historical Thought* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985), p. 72; Samuel Kinsler, *The Works of Jacques-Auguste de Thou* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1966), pp. 1–3.

³ BN MS. Dupuy 409, fols. 3–38 verso; MS. Dupuy 632, fol. 2. For parallels between James's views and those of Gallican spokesmen like de Thou, see J. H. M. Salmon, "Gallicanism and Anglicanism in the Age of the Counter-Reformation," in his *Renaissance and Revolt: Essays in the Intellectual and Social History of Early Modern France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 155–188.

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IV.⁴ While president of the Parlement of Paris, the central law court of France, he had helped to negotiate the Edict of Nantes, which guaranteed French Protestants a large measure of religious freedom and brought more than three decades of civil war to an end.⁵ His history of this period, written in Latin so as not to inflame popular feelings, traced the efforts of moderate political and religious leaders to find a solution to the conflicts rending the social fabric of the nation. In his dedication of the history to Henry IV, written in 1601, de Thou paid tribute to the efforts of the French king in bringing about a judicious religious settlement. Differences over religion, he noted in the dedication, had provoked continuous warfare in the Christian world for the better part of a century.⁶ “Flames, exile, and proscriptions” had done more to irritate than to heal afflictions of the spirit.⁷ Persecution had only strengthened resistance and inspired dissidents to greater efforts.⁸ What was needed was to draw together “by moderate conversations and by pacific conferences” those who otherwise seemed bent on confrontation and violence.⁹ Using specific examples, de Thou endeavored to show that princes who “preferred sweetness to the force of arms for terminating wars of religion, even on disadvantageous terms, have acted prudently and in conformity with the maxims of the ancient Church.”¹⁰ It was for this challenging task of religious reconciliation that de Thou’s letter and book sought to recruit James, a monarch

⁴ Corrado Vivanti, *Lotta politica e pace religiosa in Francia fra Cinque e Seicento* (Turin: Einaudi, 1963), pp. 292–324.

⁵ N. M. Sutherland, *The Huguenot Struggle for Recognition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), pp. 321–332; Roland Mousnier, *The Assassination of Henry IV: The Tyrannicide Problem and the Consolidation of the French Absolute Monarchy in the Early Seventeenth Century*, trans. Joan Spencer (London: Faber and Faber, 1973), pp. 143–151.

⁶ De Thou’s book appeared as *Historiarum sui temporis, pars prima* (Paris: Mamertus Patissonus, 1604). The preface was translated into French by Jean Hotman de Villiers and was published in Paris in 1604. The edition used here is Jacques-Auguste de Thou, *Histoire universelle*, 11 vols. (The Hague: Henri Scheurleer, 1740), vol. 1, pp. xxxix–lxii. The reference is to page xli.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. xli–xlii. ⁸ *Ibid.*, p. xliii. ⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. xlvii. For Henry’s efforts to achieve a religious reconciliation in France, see Mousnier, *Assassination of Henry IV*, pp. 138–183; Vivanti, *Lotta politica e pace religiosa*, pp. 189–291; W. B. Patterson, “Henry IV and the Huguenot Appeal for a Return to Poissy,” in Derek Baker, ed., *Schism, Heresy and Religious Protest* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), Studies in Church History, IX, pp. 247–257, and “Jean de Serres and the Politics of Religious Pacification, 1594–8,” in Derek Baker, ed., *Church, Society and Politics* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1975), Studies in Church History, XII, pp. 223–244; David Buisseret, *Henry IV* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1984), pp. 28–29, 44–50, 70–74; Mark Greengrass, *France in the Age of Henri IV: The Struggle for Stability* (London: Longman, 1984), pp. 58–87; and Ronald S. Love, “Winning the Catholics: Henri IV and the Religious Dilemma in August 1589,” *Canadian Journal of History*, 24 (December, 1989), 361–379. For Henry’s conversion to Roman Catholicism and the religious, political, and cultural circumstances surrounding the event, see Michael Wolfe, *The Conversion of Henri IV: Politics, Power, and Religious Belief in Early Modern France* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993).

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who now reigned over three nations in the British Isles and could significantly influence European religious and political affairs.

If de Thou's audacious request that James commit himself to the cause of Christian unity is surprising, the king's reply is equally so. In his letter from Westminster on March 4, 1604, James thanked de Thou for his letter and book, and declared that he took in good part de Thou's exhortation that he participate in "the union of the Church" by helping to compose "the differences which prevail in Religion."¹¹ He assured de Thou that he was not only well disposed to this enterprise but wholeheartedly committed to it. James declared that he had never been "of a sectarian spirit nor resistant to the well-being of Christendom."¹² He wished, moreover, "that all Princes and Potentates were touched by the same inclination and desire" as he. James's hope was "to achieve and manage a work so worthy and important to that good conclusion, [namely] to the solace and universal peace of Christendom."¹³ The king thereby pledged to be an active participant in a movement aimed at bringing about a new era of religious peace and concord in Europe. This exchange of letters between a Catholic historian and jurist, closely associated with the king of France, and a Protestant king, brought up as a Calvinist in Scotland and now the Supreme Governor of the Church of England, is striking in the concern both men showed for a religious peace beyond their own national borders. Neither de Thou nor James was content to see religious issues dealt with only on one side of the English Channel. Both felt that religious differences posed a serious threat to the Europe of which their countries were a part; both believed that a broader, more permanent settlement was urgently needed. Their letters speak of the concord of the Church, not the churches, and they stress the well-being of Christendom. Neither man, moreover, was simply using polite and well-modulated phrases without any intention of acting in accordance with his stated convictions. De Thou made Paris a center of irenic activity by his scholarship and by his correspondence with statesmen, scholars, and religious leaders.¹⁴ James devoted a great deal of his time for more than two decades on the English throne to the task he had agreed to help carry out –

¹¹ BN MS. Dupuy 409, fol. 39; MS. Dupuy 632, fol. 3.

¹² BN MS. Dupuy 409, fol. 39; MS. Dupuy 632, fol. 3.

¹³ BN MS. Dupuy 409, fol. 39; MS. Dupuy 632, fol. 3.

¹⁴ BN MS. Dupuy 632 contains letters to de Thou thanking him for his book from Frederick, Elector Palatine, in Heidelberg, December 10, 1606 (fol. 7); Cardinal François de Joyeuse in Rome, January 29, 1604 (fol. 11); Philippe Canaye, sieur de Fresnes in Venice, March 10, 1604 (fol. 49); Joseph della Scala [Scaliger] in Leyden, March 13, 1604 (fol. 53); George Michael Lingelsheim in Heidelberg, October 1604 (fol. 66); and William Camden in London, May 1605 (fol. 101). Canaye commented that he believed that God had chosen such means as de Thou described for calming the clamors in church and state; he noted the exclusivist claims of Roman Catholicism towards the Reformed Churches and of the Reformed Churches towards the Anabaptists, and the need for charity by all (fols. 49

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indeed, he had already begun this work through diplomatic channels, as de Thou was probably aware.¹⁵

James's concern for church unity on an international scale – reaching across denominational as well as national boundaries – became evident at the time of his accession in England. But it had been shaped and developed in Scotland, where he had been king for thirty-five of his thirty-six years before coming to England and where he had been personally responsible for the government for almost two decades. In a period of civil war and violent upheavals in Scotland, he had had ample opportunity to witness the divisive effects religion could have on the social and political life of his own nation. He had reflected upon the larger questions of the ruler's authority and responsibility in the religious as well as in the political sphere.

James was born on June 19, 1566, in the midst of a political and religious upheaval threatening the government of his mother, Mary Queen of Scots; and he was crowned king a little over a year later as one event in a rebellion aimed at ousting her from the throne and securing the Scottish Reformation on a permanent basis.¹⁶ A civil war ensued between adherents of the queen and those of the infant king that continued until the surrender of Edinburgh Castle in 1573, when James was nearly seven years old. Some of James's earliest memories must have been of events during these years of religious and political turmoil, even though he was cared for by the earl and countess of Mar in the relative safety of Stirling Castle, and the government was in

verso–50). De Thou's thought and activities are described in Vivanti, *Lotta politica e pace religiosa*, pp. 292–324, 357–362, and *passim*.

¹⁵ See below, chapter 2. De Thou kept in touch with events in England through Ambassador Beaumont, a family connection. BN MS. Dupuy 819, fols. 83–93, and MS. Dupuy 830, fols. 33–51, contain Beaumont's letters to de Thou, 1603–1604. For de Thou's subsequent relations with James, see H. R. Trevor-Roper, *Queen Elizabeth's First Historian: William Camden and the Beginnings of English 'Civil History'* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1971), pp. 12–17.

¹⁶ Scholarly treatments of James's life and career in Scotland include Jenny Wormald, *Court, Kirk and Community: Scotland, 1470–1625* (London: Edward Arnold, 1981), pp. 143–190; W. Croft Dickinson, *Scotland: From the Earliest Times to 1603*, third edition, revised by Archibald A. M. Duncan (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), pp. 365–401; Jennifer M. Brown, "Scottish Politics, 1567–1625," in Alan G. R. Smith, ed., *The Reign of James VI and I* (London: Macmillan, 1973), pp. 22–39; and Gordon Donaldson, *Scotland: James V to James VII* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1965), pp. 157–275. Maurice Lee, Jr., *John Maitland of Thirlestane and the Foundation of the Stewart Despotism in Scotland* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959) says a great deal about James as well as his able minister. See also Maurice Lee, Jr., *Great Britain's Solomon: James VI and I in His Three Kingdoms* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990), esp. pp. 1–92. The still standard biography of James, D. Harris Willson, *King James VI and I* (New York: Henry Holt, 1956), treats the king's reign in Scotland in some detail on pp. 13–137. Among older works, T. J. Henderson, *James I and VI* (Paris and London: Goupil, 1904), pp. 1–169, is of special interest on Scotland. For a contemporary life by an unknown author, see *The Historie and Life of King James the Sext*, ed. Thomas Thomson (Edinburgh: Bannatyne Club, 1825).

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the hands of regents who spent most of their time elsewhere.¹⁷ But the fate of the regents themselves brought home to him the harsh facts of Scottish public life. His mother's half-brother, James Stewart, earl of Moray, the first regent, was killed in 1570 by a member of a family closely allied with his mother's party. The second regent, Matthew Stewart, earl of Lennox, James's paternal grandfather, was killed in Stirling by raiders from the queen's garrison in Edinburgh. John Erskine, earl of Mar, James's guardian, who served as the third regent for only a year, died a natural death. But the fourth regent, James Douglas, earl of Morton, whose firm control of the government lasted for a half-dozen years beginning in 1572, was eventually beheaded in 1581 for complicity in the murder of James's father, Henry, Lord Darnley, many years earlier.¹⁸

This lurid spectacle of political intrigue and violence may seem to have more to do with Scotland's propensity for feuding than with religion. But the parties that formed as a result of Mary's forced abdication had a great deal to do with the Protestant Reformation which had been approved by Parliament in the summer of 1560, during an interval between the death of the queen mother and regent, Mary of Guise, and the return to Scotland from France of her daughter Mary Queen of Scots.¹⁹ Though Mary Queen of Scots had not attempted a Catholic restoration, neither had she ratified the legislation of 1560, and she had continued to attend mass in her own chapel. Her marriage to a Catholic, her cousin Darnley, and the birth of their son James seemed to threaten the future of Protestantism as well as the political prospects and material well-being of the supporters of the Reformation. Religion was a key element in the uprising against Mary Queen of Scots and in the formation of parties around her and around her infant son.²⁰

Even after the king's party captured Edinburgh Castle with the help of English forces, and the future of Protestantism in Scotland seemed assured, parties with a religious as well as political orientation struggled to control the young king and to dominate his government. After Morton had been toppled from power in March 1578 by his political enemies, he managed to regain much of his influence over the king by joining in a plot with the

¹⁷ Willson, *King James VI and I*, pp. 19–27; Henderson, *James I and VI*, pp. 6–11. The violent and often treacherous actions of the civil war are described in *Historie and Life of King James the Sext*, pp. 74–145.

¹⁸ Donaldson, *Scotland: James V to James VII*, pp. 163–173.

¹⁹ Wormald, *Court, Kirk and Community*, pp. 95–102.

²⁰ Dickinson, *Scotland: From the Earliest Times to 1603*, pp. 347–361. The complexities of these factions are made clear in Jenny Wormald, *Mary Queen of Scots: A Study in Failure* (London: George Philip, 1988), pp. 129–176. For the uneven pace of the Reformation, see Ian B. Cowan, *The Scottish Reformation: Church and Society in Sixteenth Century Scotland* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1982), esp. pp. 115–120, 159–181.

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young earl of Mar to take custody of the king at Stirling.²¹ This grim example was to be imitated by other powerful figures who either kidnapped James or made audacious attempts to do so. In order to end the personal ascendancy over the king by his cousin Esmé Stuart, duke of Lennox, suspected of furthering pro-Catholic and pro-French activities, a group of Protestant nobles seized James in the Ruthven Raid in 1582 and kept him in confinement for ten months. James escaped, taking refuge with a group of conservative magnates, several of them Catholics.²² Again, in 1585, a group of Protestant lords rose in arms, with the support of England, to force the removal of the king's leading minister, James Stewart, earl of Arran, whose policies were inimical to their interests and to the Scottish Kirk. In the 1590s, further attempts to seize the king – James then being a young man in his twenties – were made by his cousin Francis Stewart, earl of Bothwell, who for a time championed the cause of Protestants outraged by the actions of rebellious Catholic lords. As late as 1600, in a mysterious episode known as the Gowrie conspiracy, involving the same family with strong Protestant ties that had been involved in the Ruthven Raid, John Ruthven, earl of Gowrie, and his brother Alexander, master of Ruthven, both suspected of plotting to seize the king, were slain by followers of James.²³

Religion was not, of course, the only element – or necessarily the most important element – in these and other threats and acts of violence in James's years at the head of the Scottish government. For better or worse, government in Scotland was intensely personal, even at the national level, and personal and familial loyalties as well as animosities played an important part in the political life of the nation.²⁴ But Scotland was also undergoing a momentous change as the result of the Reformation in 1560. Institutional forms were disappearing, worship had been drastically altered in some places, a reversal in foreign alliances was taking place, and social and moral values were being redefined. Powerful elements in society favored or opposed these changes and acted accordingly.²⁵ The crown had com-

²¹ Donaldson, *Scotland: James V to James VII*, pp. 171–172. John Erskine, earl of Mar, wrested control of the king from his uncle Alexander Erskine, “who had succeeded his brother, the Regent Mar, as keeper of the king's person” (p. 171).

²² Willson, *King James VI and I*, pp. 42–47; Donaldson, *Scotland: James V to James VII*, pp. 178–180, 187. Leaders of the Ruthven faction included William Ruthven, earl of Gowrie; Sir Thomas Lyon of Baldukie, master of Glamis; and Archibald Douglas, earl of Angus. Esmé Stuart (or Stewart), the only son of John, the third son of the third earl of Lennox, was brought up in France from an early age. Matthew Stewart, the fourth earl of Lennox, an older brother of John's, was James VI's paternal grandfather as well as the second regent. Esmé was thus a first cousin of James's father, Lord Darnley.

²³ Willson, *King James VI and I*, pp. 126–130; Donaldson, *Scotland: James V to James VII*, pp. 203–204; *Historie and Life of King James the Sext*, pp. 375–376.

²⁴ Brown, “Scottish Politics, 1567–1625,” in Smith, *The Reign of James VI and I*, pp. 22–39; Wormald, *Court, Kirk and Community*, pp. 151–155.

²⁵ Dickinson, *Scotland: From the Earliest Times to 1603*, pp. 313–345; Wormald, *Court, Kirk*

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paratively slender resources with which to maintain order and to extend, even in a modest way, the rule of law. Religious differences, dating from the middle decades of the century, when Protestant teachings and practices began to supplant those of Catholicism in many lowland areas, tended to exacerbate other sources of conflict and to make actions of an irresponsible and lawless kind seem morally acceptable. James's awareness of the uses to which differences in religion could be put was no doubt one reason that he, like Henry IV of France, became intensely interested in ways in which these differences could be peacefully resolved.

A special problem for James and for Scotland was the unfinished character of the Scottish Reformation during his reign, a circumstance which had led to serious disagreements among Protestants, especially on the subject of polity. The Reformed Kirk took shape in the 1560s, after Parliament had repudiated the jurisdiction of the pope, forbidden the mass, and approved a new confession of faith. This legislation had not been approved by Mary, though she had allowed its provisions to take effect and had, in the spring of 1567, accepted an Act of Parliament which affirmed the state of religion as it had existed from the time of her return to Scotland. The three fundamental religious acts of 1560 were finally reenacted by Parliament in December 1567, after James's accession.²⁶ In the meantime, the new Church had grown up alongside the shadow of the old, since those who held ecclesiastical offices were not dispossessed, though they found it difficult or impossible to carry out their spiritual functions. It was not until 1573, at the end of the civil war, that a systematic attempt was made to remove from office those clergymen who did not adhere to the teachings of the Scots Confession.²⁷ In the meantime, some of the provisions of the first Book of Discipline, drawn up by a group of ministers associated with John Knox in 1560–61, had been put into effect, including the holding of a General Assembly of the Kirk as the highest institution of ecclesiastical government. A major obstacle to the implementation of the book's provisions for education and charity was that it called for the use of all ecclesiastical revenues, and many of these were in lay hands.²⁸ The Book of Discipline had recognized the need for officials who would oversee local

and Community, pp. 75–121; J. H. S. Burleigh, *A Church History of Scotland* (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), pp. 117–187.

²⁶ Wormald, *Mary Queen of Scots: A Study in Failure*, pp. 103, 107–110, 120, 162–163; William Croft Dickinson, Gordon Donaldson, and Isabel A. Milne, eds., *A Source Book of Scottish History*, 3 vols. (Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson, 1958–1961), vol. II, pp. 185–187; vol. III, p. 3. For the full texts of these documents, see Thomas Thomson and C. Innes, eds., *The Acts of the Parliaments of Scotland*, 12 vols. (Edinburgh: Published by Royal Command, 1814–1875), vol. II, pp. 525–535, 548–549, and vol. III, pp. 36–37.

²⁷ Burleigh, *Church History of Scotland*, p. 194.

²⁸ James K. Cameron, *First Book of Discipline* (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 1972), pp. 3–14.

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churches, supervise the establishment of new ones, and ensure that only qualified persons would serve as ministers. It specified that such officials, called superintendents, would be in charge of areas whose boundaries were intended to reflect the geographical configurations of the country.²⁹ In the early 1560s five superintendents and three bishops who conformed to the new religious settlement had begun their work. Despite the existence of this system, the government under Morton replaced it with another, by appointing Protestants to bishoprics held by Catholics, as they became vacant. The jurisdictional problems with the surviving superintendents were mostly resolved, but the new bishops earned the sarcastic name of “tulchans” for their willingness to allow revenues from their offices to be used for pensions or other political purposes.³⁰

The opponents of episcopacy found an influential spokesman in Andrew Melville, recently returned from several years of study in Geneva, who helped to draw up a second Book of Discipline. This book described a system of polity by ecclesiastical councils from the local to the national level without any reference to bishops.³¹ Though the book received the approval of the General Assembly in 1578, it was not immediately approved by Parliament. The result was that two systems of polity existed simultaneously in the late 1570s and early 1580s. One was that of bishops, with jurisdiction over the dioceses of the pre-Reformation Church. The other was that of kirk sessions and presbyteries, associations of ministers and elders which were linked to the higher councils or “courts” of provincial synods and the General Assembly of the whole Kirk.³² James had, perforce, to grapple with a problem which threatened the unity and stability of the established Church. When the Melvillian system was accepted by the Assembly,

²⁹ Cameron, *First Book of Discipline*, pp. 20–75, 115–128. For discussion of this system and its significance, see Gordon Donaldson, *The Scottish Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960), pp. 59–66, 102–129. For a contemporary description by a defender of episcopacy in the Scottish Church, see John Spottiswoode, *The History of the Church of Scotland* [first published 1655], ed. M. Russell, 3 vols. (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1851), vol. I, pp. 325, 331–345, 371–372.

³⁰ Burleigh, *Church History of Scotland*, pp. 192–196; Donaldson, *Scottish Reformation*, pp. 159–173, 194–195; James Melville, *The Autobiography and Diary*, ed. Robert Pitcairn (Edinburgh: Wodrow Society, 1842), p. 31. As Burleigh explains, the bishops “were popularly derided as ‘Tulchan,’ the name given to straw-stuffed calf skins which country folk used to induce their cows to give milk more freely!” (p. 196). Such inroads on episcopal revenues by the government had been commonplace in pre-Reformation Scotland and were familiar in the Elizabethan Church of England.

³¹ For Melville’s part in drafting the book, which had over thirty authors, see James Kirk, ed., *The Second Book of Discipline* (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 1980), pp. 46–56. For a treatment of Scottish ecclesiastical polity seen as essentially presbyterian from 1560, see James Kirk, “‘The Polities of the Best Reformed Kirks’: Scottish Achievements and English Aspirations in Church Government after the Reformation: A Revision Article,” *Scottish Historical Review*, 59 (1980), 22–53.

³² Donaldson, *Scottish Reformation*, pp. 203–210.

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however, he was not yet twelve years old, and the first steps that were taken to counter it were more the work of his leading ministers than they were his own. Under Arran's influence, the "Black Acts" of 1584 were passed, calling upon the bishops to set their dioceses in order and declaring the king supreme over the spiritual as well as the temporal estates.³³ This action was undermined by the Act of Annexation of 1587, passed under the influence of John Maitland of Thirlestane, the king's leading minister, which appropriated most of the properties of the bishops to the crown, severely weakening their position and lowering them in public esteem. Maitland had been a Marian and was suspected of Catholic leanings by some of the more extreme Protestants. But he saw clear advantages in maintaining close ties with the Kirk.³⁴ Meanwhile presbyteries continued to spread across the country and, in 1592, their dominance was recognized by a parliamentary act confirming the existing presbyterian system and in effect approving the major features of the second Book of Discipline.³⁵

It might seem that the problem of polity had been solved for James as well as for the Kirk, so that all he needed to do was to accept the decisions made in 1592. But in fact this arrangement presented several practical difficulties, and it was, in addition, personally distasteful to the king. For one thing, it did not provide adequate representation of the Church in Parliament, where the clergy had traditionally constituted one of the three estates and had helped to counterbalance the influence of the nobility. For another, the system of presbyteries was not complete, especially in less populous areas, and the assembly found it necessary to appoint commissioners to exercise oversight where it was needed.³⁶ More importantly James had reason to be apprehensive about a system of ecclesiastical polity in which the crown did not play a central part. He was made acutely aware of this in a conversation with Andrew Melville in 1596 in which the theologian elaborated on the presbyterian theory of the two kingdoms by saying that in addition to the kingdom of which James was head, there was

Christ Jesus, and his kingdome the kirk, whose subject King James the Sixt is, and of whose kingdome [he is] not a king, nor a head, nor a lord, but a member; and they whom Christ has called, and commanded to watch over his kirk, and governe his spirituall kingdome, have sufficient power of him, and authoritie so to doe, both together and severallie, the which no Christian king nor prince sould controll and

³³ Dickinson, Donaldson, and Milne, *Source Book of Scottish History*, vol. III, pp. 39–43.

³⁴ Lee, *John Maitland of Thirlestane*, pp. 136–144; Gordon Donaldson, "The Scottish Church, 1567–1625," in Smith, *Reign of James VI and I*, p. 49.

³⁵ Dickinson, Donaldson, and Milne, *Source Book of Scottish History*, vol. III, pp. 47–49; Kirk, *Second Book of Discipline*, pp. 152–154; Lee, *John Maitland of Thirlestane*, pp. 248–250.

³⁶ Donaldson, *Scottish Reformation*, pp. 218–225. Donaldson argues that practical considerations were James's main concern.

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discharge, but fortife and assist, otherwise, not faithfull subjects, nor members of Christ.³⁷

It was this theory, rooted in the theology of the Protestant Reformers and in formularies and pronouncements of the Kirk, which lay behind the distinction between ecclesiastical and civil authority in the second Book of Discipline: “the ministeris exerce not the civil jurisdiction, bot teaches the magistrat how it sould be exercit according to the word.”³⁸ James was not willing to subordinate the civil authority to the Kirk in the way this theory prescribed. Nor did he enjoy the hectoring to which he and members of his government were exposed from pulpits in Edinburgh and elsewhere. For his own part, he felt a deep responsibility for the Church which the theory and the polity of the second Book of Discipline seemed to deny.

Consequently the king took steps, in the late 1590s, to reshape the polity of the Church, make its voice heard in a regular way in the councils of government, and link it more closely to the crown. In this campaign, which had all the appearances of being well thought out in advance, James made use of the power given to the crown in the ecclesiastical legislation of 1584 and 1592 to determine the time and place of the meetings of the General Assembly of the Scottish Kirk.³⁹ Beginning in 1597 he deliberately scheduled most of its meetings in places that the more conservative ministers from the north of Scotland could easily reach and away from Edinburgh and St. Andrews, where members of the party of Melville were numerous. He also exercised a good deal of personal influence over the members by attending meetings and lobbying for the measures he wanted.⁴⁰ In May 1597 at Dundee, he persuaded the assembly to create a commission to confer with him about matters of concern to the Kirk between assembly meetings. By

³⁷ David Calderwood, *The History of the Kirk of Scotland*, ed. Thomas Thomson, 8 vols. (Edinburgh: Wodrow Society, 1842–1849), vol. V, p. 440. Andrew Melville’s nephew James describes this incident, which he witnessed, in detail in *The Autobiography and Diary*, ed. Pitcairn, pp. 369–371. For a similar expression of this theory by Melville in 1595, see Calderwood, *History of the Kirk*, vol. V, p. 378.

³⁸ Kirk, *Second Book of Discipline*, pp. 171–172. For a detailed rationale for the theory, showing its theological antecedents in Scotland and on the continent, see James Kirk, *Patterns of Reform: Continuity and Change in the Reformation Kirk* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1989), pp. 232–279. For a critique of the “two kingdoms” theory in light of medieval and Reformation relations between the civil and religious authorities in Scotland, see Gordon Donaldson, *Scottish Church History* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1985), pp. 220–238.

³⁹ Burleigh, *Church History of Scotland*, pp. 202, 204. Maurice Lee, Jr., in his “James VI and the Revival of Episcopacy in Scotland: 1596–1600,” *Church History*, 43, 1 (March 1974), pp. 50–64, argues that James did not plan the restoration of bishops from an earlier time, as both of the contemporary church historians, David Calderwood, the presbyterian, and John Spottiswoode, the episcopalian, believed. Rather, writes Lee, “it was not until the summer of 1600 that he definitively made up his mind” (p. 51).

⁴⁰ Lee, “James VI and the Revival of Episcopacy in Scotland: 1596–1600,” pp. 55–60.