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0521026202 - Scots and Britons: Scottish Political Thought and the Union of 1603

Edited by Roger A. Mason

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This collection of essays by distinguished scholars from Britain and North America constitutes a major contribution to the process of remapping the history of early modern British political thought. Based on a seminar held at the Folger Institute's Center for the History of British Political Thought, it takes the union of the Anglo-Scottish crowns in 1603 as its principal focus and examines the background to and consequences of the creation of a British monarchy from a distinctively Scottish viewpoint. In the process, it provides a pioneering study of Scottish political thought from the Reformation of 1560 to the covenanting revolution of the 1640s, shedding new light on the Scots' participation in the invention of Britain and on the collapse of multiple kingship in the mid-seventeenth century.

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# Scots and Britons

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*edited by*

**Roger A. Mason**

*University of St Andrews*

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Folger Institute, Washington, DC



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## Preface

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This collection of essays has its origins in a seminar held under the auspices of the Folger Institute Center for the History of British Political Thought at the Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, DC, in the autumn of 1990. Taking as its main focus the union of the English and Scottish crowns in 1603, the seminar had three interrelated aims: to explore the range and character of political discourse in Scotland in the period from 1560 to 1650; to analyse the forms of union, federation and empire proposed and debated in contemporary political literature; and to investigate the problems of Scottish self-definition within a British context which the union of 1603 engendered. Over a twelve-week period, a series of distinguished scholars from Britain and North America presented papers addressing these issues. The result was not only a highly successful seminar, but the production of a remarkably coherent body of work which explored areas of Scottish political thought and culture which hitherto have received too little attention from historians. By publishing these papers in a single collection it is hoped to open up a comparatively neglected area of study to a much wider audience and to make a significant contribution to the ongoing process of remapping the history of early modern British political thought.

As published here, the seminar's proceedings fall naturally into four overlapping and interrelated sections. The chapters in Part I are in a sense introductory, providing as they do a broad overview of the background to and consequences of the union of the crowns in both its European and British contexts and highlighting the practical and ideological problems associated with multiple kingship in the early modern period. Part II is more narrowly focused on post-Reformation Scottish political thought in general and the immense influence of George Buchanan in particular; here the papers explore the debates over kingship and sovereignty as these were articulated in the writings of Buchanan and his disciples and critics (including his pupil James VI and I) in the late sixteenth century. This is followed in Part III by chapters which concentrate on the attempts made by the Scots to envisage their place in a united Britain and take as their themes the evolution of an Anglo-British imperial ideology, the contribution of a group

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of influential Edinburgh mathematicians to the formation of Scottish national consciousness, and the development of distinct forms of legal discourse in Scotland in the reign of James VI and I. Finally, Part IV examines the political thinking of two contrasting figures in the Scottish covenanting movement of the 1640s and relates their ideological concerns and interests to the general development of Scottish political thought since the Reformation. In addition, a brief editor's introduction provides an overview of the period 1560 to 1650 from a Scottish perspective, while a concluding chapter by J. G. A. Pocock reflects on the proceedings of the seminar as a whole and sets it in the broader context of the history of early modern British political thought.

The essays can have no pretensions to being comprehensive in their coverage of the themes explored in the seminar. Meeting for two formal sessions a week over a twelve-week period, and continuing less formally and more convivially outside the confines of the classroom, the seminar inevitably ranged much more widely – and sometimes wildly – than the essays published here suggest. By the same token, it hardly needs saying that the chapters that follow do not amount to a full or definitive account of Scottish political thought from the Reformation to the covenanting revolution. In many respects, the study of Scottish political thought at the time of the union is still in its infancy and this collection can claim to fill only a few of the gaps in our knowledge. I hope, however, that it does go some way towards fulfilling the seminar's original brief and that a fuller appreciation of the problems surrounding the union of 1603 emerges from viewing it through a distinctively Scottish lens. The determination to maintain a Scottish perspective on early modern Britain is what lies behind the otherwise questionable editorial practice of insisting – except on rare occasions – on the Scottish spelling of the Stewart name. In fact, both Mary Queen of Scots and James VI used the form Stuart, as of course did all their seventeenth-century successors. The anachronistic use of the traditional Scottish spelling throughout this volume is intended simply to remind historians of Stewart England that the dynasty which came to the English throne in 1603 ruled over more than one kingdom and possessed more than one crown.

That the seminar on which this book is based took place at all is testimony to the broad-minded approach to their subject displayed by the steering committee of the Folger Institute's Center for the History of British Political Thought. I am very grateful to Lois Schwoerer, Gordon Schochet and John Pocock for making the project possible and for contributing so much to its success. In particular, it is a great pleasure to be able to acknowledge here the immense debt the project owes to John Pocock, whose idea it was to hold

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the seminar, who contributed energetically to most of its meetings, and who agreed to add a chapter of his own as a postscript to this volume. Without his enthusiastic support the seminar would never have taken place and this collection would never have seen the light of day. A similarly large debt is owed both to the generosity of the National Endowment for the Humanities, which made it possible to bring together scholars from both sides of the Atlantic, and to the staff of the Folger Institute who ensured that the privilege of directing one of their seminars was never less than a pleasure. I am particularly grateful to the Institute's Executive Director, Lena Orlin, to Pat Tatspaugh who stood in for her during a year's sabbatical leave in 1989–90, and to the Program Assistant, Carol Brobeck, for their patient handling of a mass of administrative detail. I would also like to thank Nicholas Phillipson for a great deal of helpful advice when the project was at the planning stage.

The success of such a long-running seminar is as dependent on the responsiveness of its regular participants as it is on the goodwill of those invited week by week to address them. My thanks are obviously due to all the contributors to this collection for their willingness to engage in debate over their papers and for bearing with all the vicissitudes which have accompanied their conversion into print. Equally, however, I would like to thank all those who attended the meetings of the seminar – both the stalwarts who never missed a session and those who dropped in when they could – for responding so readily to the issues which it raised. Their enthusiastic participation made the director's job a hugely enjoyable and stimulating one. While it is impossible to name them all here, I would like to record a special word of thanks to Antonio Feros and Laurie Glover whose companionship and conviviality was an unexpected but very welcome bonus. To my wife, Ellen, I owe a still greater debt: not only for tolerating an absentee husband during the first few months of our marriage, but for her constant support during the lengthy period it has taken to prepare this book for publication. My own understanding of early modern Britain has benefited enormously from having to see it through North American eyes. Finally, I would like to thank Carol Edington for reading over my own contributions to the book with her customary speed and efficiency and Richard Fisher of Cambridge University Press for his customary patience and tact.

Roger A. Mason

# Abbreviations

<i>APS</i>	T. Thomson and C. Innes (eds.), <i>Acts of the parliaments of Scotland</i> (12 vols., Edinburgh, 1814–75)
<i>BIHR</i>	<i>Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research</i>
<i>BL</i>	British Library
<i>Calderwood</i>	David Calderwood, <i>The history of the kirk of Scotland</i> (8 vols., Wodrow Society, 1842–9)
<i>CSP Dom.</i>	<i>Calendar of state papers, domestic</i> (London, 1856–97)
<i>CSP Scot.</i>	<i>Calendar of state papers relating to Scotland and Mary Queen of Scots 1547–1603</i> (Edinburgh, 1898–1969)
<i>DNB</i>	<i>Dictionary of National Biography</i>
<i>DSB</i>	<i>Dictionary of Scientific Biography</i>
<i>EHR</i>	<i>English Historical Review</i>
<i>EETS</i>	Early English Text Society
<i>HMC</i>	<i>Historical Manuscripts Commission</i>
<i>IR</i>	<i>Innes Review</i>
<i>Jac. union</i>	Bruce Galloway and Brian Levack (eds.), <i>The Jacobean union: six tracts of 1604</i> (SHS, 1985)
<i>McIlwain, Works</i>	C. H. McIlwain (ed.), <i>The political works of James I</i> (Cambridge, Mass., 1918)
<i>NLS</i>	National Library of Scotland
<i>PRO</i>	Public Record Office
<i>RPC</i>	J. H. Burton <i>et al.</i> (eds.), <i>The register of the privy council of Scotland 1545–1625</i> , first series (Edinburgh, 1877–98)
<i>SHR</i>	<i>Scottish Historical Review</i>
<i>SHS</i>	Scottish History Society
<i>SRO</i>	Scottish Record Office
<i>STS</i>	Scottish Text Society
<i>TRHS</i>	<i>Transactions of the Royal Historical Society</i>