James VI and I united the crowns of England and Scotland. His books are fundamental sources of the principles which underlay the union. In particular, his *Basilicon Doron* was a best-seller in England and circulated widely on the Continent. Among the most important and influential British writings of their period, the king's works shed light on the political climate of Shakespeare's England and the intellectual background to the civil wars which afflicted Britain in the mid-seventeenth century. James' political philosophy was a moderated absolutism, with an emphasis on the monarch's duty to rule according to law and the public good. Locke quoted his speech to parliament of 1610 approvingly, and Hobbes likewise praised 'our most wise king'. This edition is the first to draw on all the early texts of James' books, with an introduction setting them in their historical context.

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Political Writings

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KING JAMES VI and I

Political Writings

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Preface and acknowledgements

In recent years there has been a substantial growth of interest in the history and literature of Jacobean England. Amongst the most important texts produced in that period were the writings of King James VI and I himself. Harvard University Press published *The Political Works of James I*, edited by Charles Howard McIlwain, in 1918. That volume has become quite a scarce book. Moreover, an examination of the text which McIlwain printed reveals a number of peculiarities. In James' longest work, the *Basilicon Doron*, marginal comments or summaries which were included in early editions were omitted by McIlwain. He based his edition of James' writings on a single source – the king's *Workes* of 1616 – and he introduced a good many misreadings into that version. For instance, on a surprisingly large number of occasions he strangely read the long 's' of seventeenth-century script as an 'f'. In consequence, such non-existent words as 'trustieft', 'Papifts', 'feueritie', 'iustneffe', 'aduife', and 'feruants' are scattered through his edition.

The present volume is intended to present more accurate texts of James' writings than McIlwain made available. Where appropriate, the *Workes* of 1616 has been used as copy-text, but in every case it has been compared with other early versions of the king's writings. McIlwain made no attempt to track down James' sources. I have traced the sources of most direct quotations, but have not tried to verify or decipher all the references in James' writings. To do so would have increased the size of this book substantially. Many of the references occur in *Basilicon Doron* (which cites 110 classical works in its margins), but they are often too imprecise to be verified (a good discussion of

these references is in Craigie 1944–50, 2: 93–105). Unlike McIlwain's book, the present edition includes a glossary – which gives the meanings of obscure words used by James – and select biographical notes identifying some of the people whom the king mentions. It also provides translations of all non-English passages.

For reasons of space, two of the works included by McIlwain have been omitted here. These are *A Premonition to all Christian Monarches, Free Princes and States* of 1609, and *A Remonstrance . . . for the Right of Kings, against Cardinal Perron*. The *Remonstrance* was first published in French in 1615. The later English translation was not made by James, and the original French was written by Pierre Du Moulin, though it undoubtedly expressed the king's views. Both the *Premonition* and the *Remonstrance* are important works, but their central arguments against papal political claims were already set out in *Triplici Nodo, Triplex Cuneus. Or an Apologie for the Oath of Allegiance*, which was first published in 1608, and which *is* reprinted below. McIlwain included no works belonging to the last years of James' life. The present edition contains texts of two important late writings: *A Meditation upon the 27th, 28th and 29th Verses of the 27th Chapter of Saint Matthew* (1619), and *His Maiesties Declaration, Touching his proceedings in the Late Assemblie and Conuention of Parliament* (1622).

It is now more than seventeen years since I began to work on Jacobean political thinking. In those years I have learned much from more friends and scholars than there is space to thank here. My understanding of James and his ideas has been particularly influenced by Paul Christianson, Tom Cogswell, Richard Cust, Sir Geoffrey Elton, Peter Lake, John Morrill, Linda Levy Peck, Conrad Russell (Earl Russell), and Quentin Skinner. I am very grateful to Dr Peter Blayney of the Folger Shakespeare Library for bibliographical advice about James' writings and especially about *Basilicon Doron*. The staffs of the British Library, Cambridge University Library, the Folger Shakespeare Library, and Memorial Library here in Madison deserve thanks for their courtesy and efficiency. Especial thanks are due to the National Endowment of the Humanities and to the Graduate School of the University of Wisconsin-Madison for providing me with funding which made possible my researches at the Folger Shakespeare Library.

In the introduction and notes to this edition, dates are old style unless otherwise indicated, but the year is taken to begin on 1 Janu-

ary; an exception is that Jacobean books are sometimes referred to by the date given on the title-page rather than the date of publication (for example the *Workes* of 1616 is frequently mentioned; it is dated 1616 on the title-page, but was actually published early in 1617). Square brackets in the notes indicate editorial material. This edition follows the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century texts on which it is based in matters of spelling, punctuation and capitalisation. Indentations after headings have been retained. Material in the margins of the original editions has been transferred to notes. The sources which have been used for each of the works printed below are listed in the first note to that work. In addition, readings from the 1619 Latin *Opera* (STC 14346) are occasionally given in the notes. In James' text, contractions have been silently expanded. Books referred to in editorial matter were published at London unless otherwise indicated.

Abbreviations

B.L.	British Library.
Boderie	Antoine le Fèvre de la Boderie, *Ambassades en Angleterre*, 5 vols., [Paris], 1750.
Bowyer	*The Parliamentary Diary of Robert Bowyer 1606–1607*, ed. David Harris Willson, Minneapolis 1931.
C.J.	*Commons Journals*.
Craigie 1944–50	James Craigie, ed., *The Basilicon Doron of King James VI*, 2 vols., Scottish Text Society, third series, vols. 16 and 18, Edinburgh 1944–50.
H.M.C.	Historical Manuscripts Commission Reports.
L.J.	*Lords Journals*.
PP10	*Proceedings in Parliament 1610*, ed. E. R. Foster, 2 vols., New Haven 1966.
Rushworth	John Rushworth, ed., *Historical Collections*, 7 vols., 1659–1701.
S.R.	*Statutes of the Realm*, ed. T. E. Tomlins *et al.*, 11 vols., 1820–8.
SRP1	*Stuart Royal Proclamations volume 1: Royal Proclamations of James I*, ed. James F. Larkin, C.S.V., and Paul L. Hughes, Oxford 1973. References are to proclamation number.
STC	*A Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland, & Ireland and of English*

	Books Printed Abroad 1475–1640, first compiled by A. W. Pollard and G. R. Redgrave, second edition, revised and enlarged, begun by W. A. Jackson and F. S. Ferguson; completed by Katharine F. Pantzer, 3 vols., 1976–91.
Willson 1944–5	David Harris Willson, 'James I and his literary assistants', in *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 8 (1944–5), 35–57.
Winwood	Sir Ralph Winwood, *Memorials of Affairs of State in the Reigns of Queen Elizabeth and King James I Collected Chiefly from the Original Papers of Sir Ralph Winwood*, ed. E. Sawyer, 3 vols., 1725.
Wormald 1991	Jenny Wormald, 'James VI and I, *Basilikon Doron* and *The Trew Law of Free Monarchies*: the Scottish context and the English translation', in Linda Levy Peck, ed., *The Mental World of the Jacobean Court*, Cambridge 1991, 36–54.

Introduction

James VI and I was one of the most influential British political writers of the early modern period. His *Basilicon Doron* was a best-seller in England and circulated widely on the Continent (the details are discussed in Wormald 1991, 51–2). It was translated into Latin, French, Dutch, German, Swedish and other languages (a list of early translations in Craigie 1944–50, 2: 153–78, 188–90, includes thirty-eight items). The book was frequently quoted by political writers. So, too, were James' other works, and especially his speech to parliament of 21 March 1610. John Locke quoted this speech at length and approvingly. He referred respectfully to James as 'that Learned King who well understood the Notions of things' (*Two Treatises of Government*, second treatise, section 200). Thomas Hobbes likewise praised 'our most wise' King James (*Leviathan* chapter 19, final paragraph). Despite the major differences in their political thought, both Hobbes and Locke were able to praise James, for the king combined absolutist principles with an emphasis upon the monarch's duty to rule according to law and in the public good. The king's political philosophy was a nuanced, moderated absolutism. To understand his principles it is useful to look at the circumstances in which he developed them.

In 1566 Mary Queen of Scots gave birth to James. A year later she abdicated in her son's favour. This abdication had been forced upon her by powerful nobles allied with Protestant preachers. The queen tried to recover her throne in 1568, but her supporters were defeated and she fled to England. There she was placed under house arrest and in 1587 was executed for plotting against the English queen, Elizabeth. In his early years, King James was educated by

George Buchanan, one of the most famous classicists of the age. Buchanan was also an outspoken critic of royal absolutism. Like the leading Scottish reformer John Knox, Buchanan argued that a people may take up arms against a ruler who fails to promote the true religion. He held that in Scotland wicked kings had commonly been called to account by their subjects – a theme that featured strongly in his lengthy Latin history of Scotland (*Rerum Scoticarum Historia*, 1582), and in the pithy dialogue *De Jure Regni apud Scotos* (1579). Both these works were dedicated to James.

When the king grew up, he came to reject the ideas of Buchanan, Knox, and like-minded authors. He also took steps to combat the claims of such presbyterian leaders as Andrew Melville, who held that James was accountable to the church in moral and religious matters. Modern scholarship on Scottish history has emphasised the political competence of the adult James VI. The king efficiently and systematically increased royal power at the expense of the nobility and of the presbyterian church. In 1603 he inherited the crown of England on the death of Queen Elizabeth.

Mary Queen of Scots had been married to King Francis II of France. Her mother was Mary of Guise. In the later sixteenth century the Guise family took a leading part in the civil wars which afflicted France for more than thirty years. They advocated the rigid enforcement of Roman Catholicism, and the violent suppression of Protestantism. In the course of these wars, both Catholic and Protestant theorists came to argue that it was legitimate for the people to take up arms against a monarch who ruled tyrannically – for example, by failing to support the true religion. Catholics also sometimes claimed that the pope had the authority to intervene in the affairs of states, and to depose heretical monarchs. In 1585 Pope Sixtus V interfered in French affairs by excommunicating Henry of Navarre, the Protestant heir to the throne. Pius V issued a bull deposing Elizabeth I of England in 1570, and a number of Catholics plotted to assassinate her in the following years. In France, both Henry III and Henry IV (the former Henry of Navarre) were murdered by Catholic fanatics. A group of Catholic gentlemen plotted to blow up James and parliament in the famous Gunpowder Plot of 1605.

James' early experiences in Scotland alienated him from the thinking of such men as Knox and Buchanan. He also vigorously rejected

Catholic theories which legitimated the use of force by subjects against their sovereigns. Like many of his contemporaries, he looked to strong monarchical power to prevent religious civil war and maintain order. He held that kings possess a monopoly of political power, which they derive from God alone. Active resistance to monarchs is always sinful. If our king commands us to do things which contravene the law of God, we must disobey him, for we should always obey God rather than man. But if the monarch calls us to account for our disobedience, we should meekly accept whatever punishment he inflicts upon us. Kings, James argued, had a duty to rule in the public interest and (except in cases of necessity) to abide by the law of the land. But no one had the power to coerce them into performing these duties.

In 1598 the first edition of *The Trew Law of Free Monarchies* was published. It came out anonymously, but the fact that it appeared from the press of Robert Waldegrave, the king's printer, served to indicate royal authorship or at least endorsement, and the book was known to be by the king long before it was included in James' collected *Workes* of 1616 (Alberico Gentili, *Regales Disputationes Tres*, 1605, 18–19). *The Trew Law* warned against the 'Sirene songs' of people who praised or excused rebellions (p. 62). In Scotland, said James, ignorance of true political principles had long been responsible for 'endlesse calamities, miseries, and confusions' (p. 63). His purpose in writing was to 'lay downe . . . the trew grounds' of political duty 'without wasting time vpon refuting the aduersaries' (p. 62). He made it clear which adversaries he had in mind, inveighing against 'seditious preachers in these daies of whatsoeuer religion, either in this countrey or in France' (p. 71), and convicting the French Catholic League of responsibility for a 'superstitious rebellion' which had resulted in 'the great desolation of their whole countrey' (p. 82). Basing his case on Scripture, reason and history, the king argued that subjects must obey their monarch's 'commands in all things, except directly against God' and that they could never actively resist him (p. 72). The *Trew Law* is commonly seen as the most vigorously absolutist of James' writings. But it already placed considerable stress on the duties of rulers. A prince, he said, 'cannot iustly bring backe againe to himself the priuiledges once bestowed by him or his predecessors vpon any state or ranke of his subiects' (p. 80). Moreover, 'a

good king will . . . delight to rule his subiects by the lawe' (p. 75). Monarchs, in short, should honour their commitments and abide by their laws.

It was also in 1598 that James completed his most famous work, the *Basilicon Doron*. This book was written in Middle Scots. The original manuscript, in the king's own hand, still survives (B.L. Royal MS 18. B. xv). Seven copies of an Anglicised version of the work were secretly printed by Waldegrave in 1599, and distributed to James' relatives and friends. Even before the book was printed it had come to the notice of the presbyterian minister Andrew Melville, who had seen a copy of the manuscript. He very much resented some of the king's remarks about the Scottish presbyterian clergy, and disagreed with James' claim that monarchs are empowered to supervise the affairs of the church within their realms. Melville drew up a list of eighteen objections to *Basilicon Doron*. These criticisms were presented to the ecclesiastical synod of Fife in September 1599 by John Dykes. Before the synod could formally censure the book, James intervened, ordering the arrest of Dykes – who fled into exile. In England, some people took exception to passages in the book which seemed to suggest that the king desired vengeance against those responsible for his mother's execution, and also to a number of James' comments on puritans. In 1603 a revised edition of the work was published with a long preface in which the king responded to both of these objections (further details on the points made in this paragraph are in Craigie 2: 6–17).

Basilicon Doron is a book of advice purportedly written for James' son and heir Henry, to whom it was dedicated. Advice books for princes were a conventional literary genre in the sixteenth century and earlier. The king was certainly familiar with a good deal of this literature, from which he borrowed freely (a fuller discussion of the literary antecedents of *Basilicon Doron* is in Craigie 2: 63–87). Enlightening his four-year-old son was probably not his only purpose in writing the book. One possibility is that he wrote it mainly for his own amusement (Wormald 1991, 49). Another notion is that he hoped from the first that the work would be widely read. In the preface to the 1603 edition he records how the book circulated 'contrary to my intention and expectation' (p. 4), but in corrupt texts; so he was forced (much against his will) 'to publish and spread the true copie thereof, for defacing of the false copies that are alreadie spread'

(p. 5). It was a commonplace in James' day for authors to allege that they had been forced reluctantly into publication – and so to indicate that they were not motivated by love of fame or lucre. The king had two added incentives for making this kind of claim. First, some people thought it beneath the dignity of a monarch to publish books (in his preface to James' *Workes* of 1616, James Montagu, Bishop of Winchester, found it necessary to rebut this suggestion at length – sigs. b2b-c4a). Secondly, it is arguable that the king wanted to convince himself and others that his books were demanded by the public because of their literary merits (and this would help explain why the *Trew Law* and later *Triplici Nodo* were published anonymously: James hoped the works' contents would be enough to win them public approval).

Basilicon Doron is a book of practical advice rather than abstract theory. It assumed the principles of the *Trew Law* without bothering to prove them. It took for granted that the king alone was to make all final decisions on foreign and domestic policy, and it laid particular emphasis upon his supremacy in ecclesiastical affairs. Much of the advice which the king gave was intended to strengthen the position of the monarchy in Scotland. He repeatedly attacked presbyterian thinking because he held that it undermined the authority of the monarch, and he criticised heritable sheriffdoms for much the same reason (p. 29). Though James did not mention Machiavelli, he was careful to reject Machiavellian teachings, for instance insisting that one king should keep the promises he makes to others (p. 32). He referred to neo-stoicism – which had recently become fashionable through the efforts of Justus Lipsius and others – only to condemn it. As in the *Trew Law*, James stressed the duties as well as the powers of kings. A good king, he said, would think that 'his greatest contentment standeth' in the prosperity of his subjects, and would regard 'the common interesse [i.e. interest]' as 'his chiefest particular [interest]' (p. 20). A tyrant, on the other hand, would pursue his own advantage at the expense of his subjects' welfare, 'by inuerting all good Lawes to serue onely for his vnrulie priuate affections' (p. 20). Even against tyrants, rebellion was unlawful, but it was very likely to occur (p. 21), and God was certain to inflict harsh punishment upon wicked rulers (p. 21).

More than twenty years after penning *Basilicon Doron*, James planned to write another work on 'the office of a King' (p. 232). This

book never materialised, but in his *Meditation* of 1619 on Matthew 27: 27–9 James did commit to paper some preliminary reflections which he intended to serve as the basis for the larger treatise. As in his earlier writings, he argued that kings are God's deputies, accountable to Him alone (pp. 238, 241); that they are responsible for the spiritual as well as the temporal welfare of their subjects (p. 237); and that the people's prosperity is the king's greatest felicity (p. 239). Once again, he stressed the duties as well as rights of monarchs, dwelling on the onerous cares of kingship (pp. 239, 249), and urging that a ruler should not stretch 'his royall Prerogatiue but where necessitie shall require' (p. 249).

At the beginning of the *Meditation* on Matthew, James remarked that he was 'weary of Controuersies' (p. 229). Between writing *Basilicon Doron* in 1598 and dictating the *Meditation* to his favourite Buckingham in 1619 the bulk of James' literary labours consisted of controversial works targeted at Roman Catholics. After the Gunpowder Plot, the English parliament enacted new legislation against Catholics, including a statute 'for the better discovering and repressing of popish recusants' (3 & 4 Jac. I, c. 4; S.R. 4: 1071–7). This Act contained a new oath, renouncing the pope's claim to be able to depose kings and release subjects from allegiance to their sovereigns. Any recusant who twice refused this oath – which came to be known as the Oath of Allegiance – was liable to the penalties of *praemunire* (loss of goods and imprisonment during the king's pleasure). The Act was passed on 27 May 1606 (L.J. 2: 445) and printed on 25 June (Boderie 1: 177). On 12 September Pope Paul V issued a breve which forbade Catholics to take the oath and he repeated the prohibition in a second breve of 13 August 1607. Meanwhile, the Archpriest George Blackwell – leader of the English Catholic secular priests – had been captured. On 3 July 1607 he was persuaded to take the oath (*Mr. George Blackwel . . . his Answeres vpon sundry his Examinations*, 1607, 15–18). News of this reached Rome, and on 18 September the famous Catholic theologian Cardinal Robert Bellarmine wrote to Blackwell denouncing the oath. By 25 November James was at work on a reply to Bellarmine (H.M.C. Salisbury 19: 343–4). In February 1608 the book, which included responses to the two papal breves, was published by the royal printer under the title *Triplici Nodo, Triplex Cuneus. Or an Apologie for the Oath of Allegiance.*

Though *Triplici Nodo* came out anonymously, its royal authorship was widely known and it soon drew replies from Bellarmine and from the leading English Jesuit Robert Parsons. The king now prepared an answer to these two works, entitling it a *Premonition of his Maiesties, to all most Mightie Monarches, Kings, free Princes and States of Christendom*. In April 1609 this new book was issued along with a revised version of *Triplici Nodo* – of which the king now acknowledged authorship. The *Premonition* dealt not only with the papal deposing power but also with more narrowly religious matters, and it included a profession of faith by James and a section in which he attempted to prove from Scripture that the pope is Antichrist. In the years after 1608 a great many works were written in favour of and against the Oath of Allegiance. Participants in the controversy included the great Jesuit theologian and philosopher Francisco Suarez, the poet John Donne, and the churchman Lancelot Andrewes. Works connected with the dispute were published throughout Europe. In France the question of whether kings could ever be deposed or killed became highly topical when Henry IV was assassinated by a Catholic fanatic in 1610. At the French Estates General of 1614–15, the third estate proposed that it should be declared a fundamental law of the land that kings may not be deposed. This suggestion struck at the papal deposing power, and it was (successfully) resisted on behalf of the clergy by the eminent churchman Cardinal Du Perron. The Cardinal's speech against the third estate's proposal was published at Paris in 1615 under the title *Harangue faicte de la part de la chambre ecclésiastique*. His arguments, which were intended to justify the deposing power, conflicted with the position that James had adopted in his writings on the Oath of Allegiance. The king replied to Du Perron in a work entitled *Déclaration du Sérénissime Roy Iaques I . . . Pour le Droit des Rois & indépendance de leurs Couronnes* (1615). This book was first published in French but was soon translated into English. Although the work was ascribed to James on the title-page, it is certain that it was written with considerable assistance from the Huguenot Pierre Du Moulin (Willson 1944–5, 51).

The *Premonition* and James' reply to the speech of Du Perron added details to the case against the papal deposing power set out in *Triplici Nodo*, but did not really revise it. For this reason, and for considerations of space, the two later anti-papal works have been

omitted from this edition. Bellarmine's letter to Blackwell argued that Catholics could not take the Oath of Allegiance because to do so entailed denying the pope's spiritual powers. The English oath of supremacy, which had been enacted by parliament in 1559 and which office-holders were required to swear, asserted that the monarch was supreme over ecclesiastical affairs within England. According to Bellarmine, the Oath of Allegiance was just a disguised version of the Oath of Supremacy, for both oaths denied the pope's supremacy over the church. From the cardinal's point of view, this claim was valid since the pope would not have effective power to govern the church in the spiritual interest of Christians if he were unable to intervene in temporal affairs – for instance, by deposing heretical monarchs. James, like other Protestants, did not believe that the pope had any power over the church. But he insisted that the question of the pope's ecclesiastical supremacy was irrelevant to the Oath of Allegiance, which was concerned solely with civil matters. To say that the pope could not depose monarchs was to deny him only temporal and not spiritual or ecclesiastical power. The Oath of Allegiance was, therefore, very different from the Oath of Supremacy, and there was no good reason why conscientious Catholics should refuse to subscribe to the former document. In *Triplici Nodo* James attempted to prove that Scripture and the writings of the church Fathers require subjects to obey their rulers and not the pope in all temporal matters. Challenging Bellarmine's reading of ecclesiastical history, the king argued that the pope's claim to be able to depose civil sovereigns had no foundation in early Christian tradition.

James entrusted the prosecution of the Gunpowder Plotters to the attorney-general Sir Edward Coke. In 1606 he appointed Coke to the important and lucrative office of chief justice of the common pleas. Seven years later the lawyer was moved to the rather less rewarding though prestigious post of chief justice of the King's Bench. Coke wrote a famous series of law reports in which he expressed attitudes towards royal power which differed sharply from the king's own views. According to Sir Edward, the prerogatives of the monarch in England were defined by the common law of the land. Coke held that in some sense the judges derived their powers from the king, but that James could not himself act as a judge. The king did, indeed, possess great natural gifts, he said; judges, however, required not mere reason but 'artificial reason' which could be

acquired only by long years spent in the study of the law. In Coke's opinion it was the judges of the common law courts who were to decide just what prerogatives the king had. They were also to define the limits of the jurisdictions of England's various courts. In addition to the common law courts there were also church courts, chancery, and Civil (or Roman) Law courts. Coke argued that the common law was the supreme form of law in England; the jurisdictions of other courts were subordinate to those of the common law. Sir Edward frequently issued prohibitions which halted cases in church courts or chancery and brought them into the common pleas or King's Bench. In 1616 he went still further. Two swindlers named Glanville and Allen had been acquitted in common law courts and then found guilty in chancery. Coke encouraged them to bring charges of *praemunire* (see glossary) against officials of the chancery court. The judge's conduct in this and other cases not surprisingly alienated the Archbishop of Canterbury, the lord chancellor, and James himself. In November 1616 Coke was dismissed from his position as chief justice. Several months earlier, on 20 June, his actions and attitudes had been roundly attacked by James in a speech delivered before the court of Star Chamber.

The king's speech in Star Chamber did not mention Coke by name. Nevertheless, it was patently intended to criticise the judge's behaviour and opinions. James acknowledged that in settled monarchies kings employed subordinate magistrates as their deputies in judicial matters; but he insisted that they retained the power to act as judges (p. 205). Transparently alluding to Coke's doctrine of 'artificial reason', he remarked that if an interpretation of the common law 'be such, as other men which haue Logicke and common sense vnderstand not the reason, I will neuer trust such an Interpretation' (p. 212). According to James, it was not the common law judges but the king himself who was to determine the boundaries between the jurisdictions of the country's various courts: 'And this is a thing Regall, and proper to a King, to keepe euery Court within his owne bounds' (p. 213). He castigated the notion that a *praemunire* could be issued against the court of chancery, for chancery derived its jurisdiction from the king – and 'How can the King grant a *Premunire* against himselfe?' (p. 215).

Judges, said James, were not to discuss the royal prerogative unless they first obtained the permission of the king or his Council

(pp. 212–13). He was happy that the law should grant no more rights to him in his capacity as a private individual than it did to anyone else: 'I desire you to giue me no more right in my priuate Prerogatiue, then you giue to any Subiect.' But the power which he held as king was not to be disputed: 'As for the absolute Prerogatiue of the Crowne, that is no Subiect for the tongue of a Lawyer, nor is it lawfull to be disputed' (p. 214). Just as it is 'Atheisme and blasphemie to dispute what God can doe,' he declared, so 'it is presumption and high contempt in a Subiect, to dispute what a King can doe' (p. 214). It was unjustifiable, he said, 'to meddle with things against the Kings Prerogatiue, or Honour'. 'Some Gentlemen of late', he added, 'haue beene too bold this wayes.' He would take steps to see that they were punished (p. 218). These men were discontented 'with the present forme of Gouernement', 'and in euery cause that concernes Prerogatiue' they felt that they had to 'giue a snatch against a Monarchie, through their Puritanicall itching after Popularitie'. 'Some of them', he noted, 'haue shewed themselues too bold of late in the lower house of Parliament' (p. 222).

James differed from a number of members of the House of Commons on questions of political principle. It would be a mistake, however, to suppose that these differences dominated the king's dealings with his parliaments. As the speeches to parliament printed in this edition indicate, much of what James had to say concerned practical matters of policy and legislation. Moreover, he was generally careful to tone down his grander theoretical claims for parliamentary consumption. The king had no incentive to annoy members, for an unhappy parliament was not likely to vote him generous sums of money. The usual reason why James called parliaments was that he hoped they would grant him taxes. In his first years he also (and unsuccessfully) looked to parliament to enact the union between England and Scotland which he desired. He raised the theme of the union in the speech of 1604, while that of 1607 was largely devoted to this question. In 1605 he touched briefly on the union but was much more interested in the Catholic threat and especially in the Gunpowder Plot, which had been discovered just four days before the speech was delivered.

In 1610 the king hoped to get from parliament not simply a vote of taxes but a long-term financial settlement. The proposal – known as the Great Contract – was that James would give up some of the

crown's traditional feudal rights in return for an annual income voted by parliament. In the end the project broke down, but at the time that the king delivered his speech of 21 March this had not yet happened, and he was eager to retain the good will of the House of Commons. In February the attention of the House had been called to a recently published law dictionary entitled *The Interpreter* (Cambridge 1607) and written by John Cowell, a professor of Civil Law at Cambridge. In this work the professor made some trenchantly absolutist statements, for instance asserting that the king 'is above the Law by his absolute power' (Cowell, *The Interpreter*, Cambridge 1607, sig. 2Q1a). The Commons began proceedings against Cowell, but on 8 March James intervened. He did not want a debate on questions of political theory to hold up his financial negotiations with the Commons at this juncture. So he expressed his disapproval of Cowell's doctrines. On 25 March he issued a proclamation suppressing *The Interpreter* (SRP1: 244). It was very vague on just how the lawyer had erred. Cowell's teachings were not very different from the principles which the king himself had enunciated in the *Trew Law* and elsewhere. The Commons were doubtless fully aware of this when they initiated their attack on the professor.

On 11 March 1610 Samuel Harsnett, Bishop of Chichester, preached a sermon in which he adopted views similar to Cowell's, and argued that the king could tax without parliamentary consent. This sermon was criticised in parliament (Rushworth 1: 442). In view of Cowell's case and Harsnett's sermon, James decided that it would be expedient to treat the two Houses to a long speech on 21 March. In this speech he stressed his respect for the common law, and assured his hearers that he had no intention of using 'the absolute power of a King' to alter the existing form of government in England (p. 180). True, kings were 'GODS Lieutenants vpon earth' and were 'accomptable to none but God onely' (p. 181). It was sedition, said James, for subjects 'to dispute what a King may do in the height of his power' (p. 184). A good king, however, would not abuse his power but would rule according to the laws of the land. James distinguished between the earliest times, when kings governed arbitrarily, and later ages when 'Kingdomes began to be setled in ciuilitie and policie' and monarchs 'set downe their minds by Lawes, which are properly made by the King onely; but at the rogation of the people'. In settled kingdoms, rulers had a double obligation to abide by the law, for they

swore to do so in their coronation oaths, and even without the oath the office of kingship involved a duty to protect the laws: 'And therefore a King gouerning in a setled Kingdome, leaues to be a King, and degenerates into a Tyrant, assoone as he leaues off to rule according to his Lawes' (p. 183). All good kings, he added, 'will be glad to bound themselues within the limits of their Lawes; and they that perswade them the contrary, are vipers, and pests, both against them and the Commonwealth'. He himself was 'sure to goe to my graue with that reputation and comfort, that neuer King was in all his time more carefull to haue his Lawes duely obserued, and himselfe to gouerne thereafter, then I' (p. 184).

In the speech of 21 March, James stressed his tender concern for the welfare of the people. The love of his subjects, he said, was 'the greatest earthly securitie (next the fauour of GOD) to any wise or iust King' (p. 194), and he declared that 'the hearts and riches of the people, are the Kings greatest treasure' (p. 195). Such comments created a favourable impression, and the speech was well received, though according to one account 'the most strictly religious could have wished that his Highness would have been more spareing in using the name of God, and comparing the Deity with Princes Soveraignty' (John More to Sir Ralph Winwood, 24 March 1610, in *Memorials . . . of . . . Sir Ralph Winwood*, 3 vols., 1725, 3: 141). In later years, a few passages from the speech were frequently quoted, often with the intention of showing that James had favoured limited and not absolute monarchy. Unquestionably, the speech was intended to stress the king's moderation. But the theory it advanced differed in no important respect from what he said in the *Trew Law* and elsewhere. As we have seen, the *Trew Law* recommended that kings abide by the law, though it did not dwell on this point at such great length as the speech. In both texts, moreover, the king alone is made responsible for ensuring that he does in fact obey the law. Subjects might suspect that the ruler is exceeding his traditional powers, but they cannot challenge him, for it is sedition to dispute his prerogative. As James put it in a speech of 21 May 1610 (printed in PP10, 2: 100–7) if 'a king be resolute to be a tyrant, all you can do will not hinder him'. Subjects could never legitimately resist their kings, and so had no choice but to trust them: 'Kings must be trusted' (103–4). The speech of March referred to the fear which some had that the king intended 'not to limit my selfe within' customary 'bounds, but

to alter the same when I thought conuenient, by the absolute power of a King' (p. 180). In what followed, James took pains to deny that this was his intention, but said nothing at all to suggest that he lacked 'the absolute power of a King'. Bossuet, the most famous apologist for the absolutism of Louis XIV, later distinguished between arbitrary and absolute government, criticising the former but praising the latter. In arbitrary government there was no law but the king's will (Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet, *Politics Drawn from the Very Words of Holy Scripture*, translated and edited by Patrick Riley, Cambridge 1990, 263). This distinction was much the same as that which James drew between original and settled kingdoms. Indeed, there was little in James' political theory to which Bossuet would have taken exception.

If parliaments refrained from attacking his prerogatives and voted him cash, the king could get on well with them. In 1614 the Commons criticised impositions – extra-parliamentary levies on exports and imports which James had been collecting on a wide variety of commodities since 1608 – and one member delivered an inflammatory speech against the Scots. James dissolved the parliament before it had accomplished anything. When parliament met again in 1621, relations between king and Commons were initially rather more harmonious than they had sometimes been in the past. As the king noted on 26 March, 'the House of Commons at this time haue shewed greater loue, and vsed me with more respect in all their proceedings, then euer any House of Commons haue heeretofore done to mee' (*His Maiesties Speach in the Vpper House of Parliament, On Munday the 26. of March, 1621*, 1621, sig. B1b). In December, however, events occurred which made the king less happy with the Lower House. Prince Henry had died in 1612, leaving James' younger son Charles as heir to the throne. The king planned to marry Charles to a Spanish princess. This project was unpopular because Spain was a Catholic country and because Spanish troops were attacking the Palatinate, a German Protestant state ruled by the Elector Frederick V, the husband of James' daughter Elizabeth. Many people in England felt that the king should give military assistance to his son-in-law and that he ought to break off the marriage negotiations with Spain. The Commons began to debate these matters, though foreign policy and royal marriages were traditionally regarded as topics which fell under the royal prerogative and which parliament could not discuss unless the king specifically invited it to do so. James resented what he saw as

an assault on his powers and communicated his views to the Commons. In response, they asserted their privilege of free speech. The king replied by claiming that their privileges were derived from the crown and subordinate to his own powers. He warned them 'to beware to trench vpon the Prerogatiue of the Crowne, which would enforce Vs, or any iust King to retrench them of their priuiledges, that would pare his Prerogatiue and flowers of the Crowne' (p. 261). When the Commons asserted that their privileges were 'their ancient and vndoubted right and inheritance' he responded by declaring that 'the plaine truth is, That Wee cannot with patience endure Our Subiects to vse such Antimonarchicall words to Vs concerning their Liberties, except they had subioyned, that they were granted vnto them by the grace and fauour of Our Predecessours' (pp. 262–3). On 18 December the Commons approved a Protestation setting out their position. On the following day parliament was adjourned. Eleven days later James tore the Protestation out of the Commons' Journal, and on 6 January 1622 he dissolved parliament. Shortly afterwards, he published his *Declaration*, giving his version of the whole affair.

In his youth, James' library had already included the *Six livres de la république* of the French absolutist Jean Bodin. Though the two men diverged sharply on a number of points – including many religious questions – their political theories plainly belong to the same family. Along with Bodin, the king was one of the authorities most frequently quoted by Sir Robert Filmer. Like Filmer – and Bodin – James held that absolute monarchy was sanctioned by Scripture, and also by reason and history. Along with Filmer and Hobbes, the king was one of the most important British theoreticians of absolutism of the early modern period. Written in very lively and pungent prose, his books are also documents of the greatest significance for an understanding of the relationship between literature and political power in Shakespeare's England. Their main subject is power and their author was uniquely placed to write on that subject. Finally, James' writings are of major importance to the study of British history in the years before the Civil War. Whether or not the king's ideas were instrumental in bringing about that war is difficult to determine unless we read his works.

Principal events in James' life

1566	Birth of James (son of Mary Queen of Scots and Henry Stewart, Lord Darnley).
1567	Mary Queen of Scots is compelled to abdicate the Scottish throne in favour of James, who becomes King James VI.
1570	Pope Pius V deposes Elizabeth I.
1582	The Ruthven Raid: James is seized by the Earl of Gowrie.
1583	James escapes from the custody of Gowrie.
1584	Execution of Gowrie. The Scottish parliament passes the 'Black Acts', asserting royal power over the church.
1585	Return of Gowrie's supporters from exile in England; they seize James at Stirling.
1587	Execution of Mary Queen of Scots.
1588	The Spanish Armada sails for England.
1589	Assassination of Henry III of France. Marriage of James to Anne of Denmark.
1592	Partial repeal of the 'Black Acts', but many Scottish churchmen become increasingly critical of the king, siding against him with Francis Stewart, Earl of Bothwell.
1594	Birth of James' son Henry.
1594–5	Alliance between Bothwell and the rebellious Catholic Earls of Huntly and Errol; defeated by James, they go into exile.

1596–8	Struggle for control over the Scottish church between James and presbyterian ministers; the king largely successful.
1598	James completes a manuscript of *Basilicon Doron* and publishes (without author's name) *The Trew Law of Free Monarchies*.
1599	First printing of *Basilicon Doron* in an issue of seven copies for private distribution.
1600	(5 August) Attempt to seize James by the Earl of Gowrie and his brother, who are killed. (19 November) Birth of James' son Charles (later Charles I).
1603	(March) Publication at Edinburgh of a revised version of *Basilicon Doron*. (24 March) Death of Elizabeth. James becomes king of England. (March/April) *Basilicon Doron* reprinted in London. (April) *The Trew Law of Free Monarchies* reprinted in London.
1605	(5 November) Discovery of the Gunpowder Plot of some Catholic gentlemen to blow up the king and parliament.
1606	(27 May) Parliament passes anti-Catholic legislation including a new Oath of Allegiance rejecting the pope's claim to have the authority to depose kings. (12 September) Pope Paul V issues a breve condemning the Oath of Allegiance.
1607	(31 March) James delivers a speech to parliament in favour of union between England and Scotland. (13 August) Paul V issues a second breve, repeating his condemnation of the Oath of Allegiance. (18 September) Cardinal Robert Bellarmine writes to Blackwell remonstrating with him for taking the Oath of Allegiance.
1608	(February) Publication (without author's name) of James' reply to the papal breves and to Bellarmine (*Triplici Nodo, Triplex Cuneus. Or an Apologie for the Oath of Allegiance*).
1609	Twelve Years' Truce temporarily ends war between Spain and the Dutch. A revised version of *Triplici Nodo* issued under the king's

	name, along with a *Premonition . . . to all Most Mightie Monarches, Kings, Free Princes and States of Christendom.*
1610	(February-March) Negotiations between king and Commons for a settlement of royal finances.
	(21 March) James delivers a speech to parliament promising to rule moderately.
1610	(4 May) Assassination of Henry IV of France.
1612	Death of Prince Henry.
1616	(20 June) James delivers a speech in Star Chamber, taking issue with the ideas of the judge Sir Edward Coke on the relationship between royal power and the law, and on other questions.
	(15 November) James deprives Coke of his office as lord chief justice of the King's Bench.
1617	(February) Publication of James' *Workes* (dated 1616 on title-page).
1618	Beginning of Bohemian revolt against the Habsburgs.
1619	James' son-in-law the Elector Palatine Frederick V accepts election to the throne of Bohemia.
1620	Reissue, with additions, of James' *Workes*.
	Frederick V driven out of Bohemia by imperialist troops.
1621	Renewal of war between Spain and the Dutch.
	The Palatinate invaded by Spanish troops.
	James summons parliament; the House of Commons discusses foreign policy and the projected marriage of Prince Charles to a Spanish princess; dispute between king and Commons over parliamentary privilege; the Commons draw up a Protestation asserting their right of free speech (18 December); parliament is adjourned (19 December); James tears the Protestation from the Commons' Journal (30 December).
1622	(6 January) James dissolves parliament and shortly afterwards publishes a *Declaration* setting out his reasons for doing so.
1625	(27 March) Death of James.

Bibliographical note

A great deal has been written about James VI and I. In what follows, it will be possible to mention only a small fraction of the large number of important books and articles which discuss the monarch and his reign.

The standard scholarly biography of James is D. H. Willson, *King James VI and I*, 1956. Willson plainly detested the king, and his book must be read with caution. A more balanced account, which draws on much recent research, is Maurice Lee, Jr, *Great Britain's Solomon: James VI and I in his Three Kingdoms*, Urbana 1990. Other useful writings by the same author include *Government by Pen: Scotland under James VI*, Urbana 1980, and a historiographical survey entitled 'James I and the historians: not a bad king after all?', in *Albion* 16 (1984), 151–63. Jenny Wormald is currently preparing a full biography of James, and is the author of an important interpretative article: 'James VI and I: two kings or one?', in *History* 68 (1983), 187–209. The classic traditional account of James' reign in England is S. R. Gardiner's *History of England from the Accession of James I to the Outbreak of the Civil War, 1603–1642*, 10 vols., 1883 (the treatment of James runs from the beginning of volume 1 to p. 316 of volume 5). The most important of modern 'revisionist' historians – who have challenged Gardiner's interpretation on a number of fundamental issues – is Conrad Russell. Relevant works by Russell include *Parliament and English Politics 1621–1629*, Oxford 1979, and *The Causes of the English Civil War*, Oxford 1990. A book of essays which take issue with some of Russell's conclusions is Richard Cust and Ann Hughes, eds., *Conflict in Early Stuart England: studies in religion and politics 1603–*

1642, 1989. An older but still helpful collection of essays is A. G. R. Smith, ed., *The Reign of James VI and I*, 1973.

Recent accounts of James' political thought include three essays which approach the subject from different angles and which reach interestingly divergent conclusions. They are: Jenny Wormald, 'James VI and I, *Basilikon Doron* and *The Trew Law of Free Monarchies*: the Scottish context and the English translation'; J. P. Sommerville, 'James I and the divine right of kings: English politics and continental theory'; and Paul Christianson, 'Royal and parliamentary voices on the ancient constitution, *c.*1604–1621'. All three are in Linda Levy Peck, ed., *The Mental World of the Jacobean Court*, Cambridge 1991 (at pp. 36–54, 55–70, and 71–95). The other essays in Peck's collection also contain much useful information on Jacobean thought and politics. There is a great deal of valuable material on James and his thought in the introductions and notes to James Craigie's editions of *Basilicon Doron* (Scottish Text Society, third series, vols. 16 and 18, Edinburgh 1944–50) and the *Trew Law of Free Monarchies* (in *Minor Prose Works of King James VI and I*, Scottish Text Society, fourth series, vol. 14, Edinburgh 1982). C. H. McIlwain's long introduction to his edition of *The Political Works of James I*, Cambridge, Mass. 1918, is especially strong on the debate over the Jacobean Oath of Allegiance. A more recent account of this debate is J. P. Sommerville, 'Jacobean political thought and the controversy over the Oath of Allegiance', unpublished Cambridge University Ph.D. dissertation, 1981.

A good survey of the background to many of James' ideas, and a judicious summary of the king's thinking, is in J. H. M. Salmon, 'Catholic resistance theory, Ultramontanism, and the royalist response, 1580–1620', in *The Cambridge History of Political Thought 1450–1700*, edited by J. H. Burns with the assistance of Mark Goldie, Cambridge 1991, 219–53. Quentin Skinner's *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, 2 vols., Cambridge 1978, is a highly important account of late medieval and early modern political thinking; volume 2 in particular contains a great deal of information useful for understanding the ideas of James I. J. P. Sommerville's *Politics and Ideology in England, 1603–1640*, 1986, discusses political ideas and politics under James I and his son; the first chapter – on 'The Divine Right of Kings' – is particularly relevant to James' thinking. J. N. Figgis' *The Divine Right of Kings*, 2nd edn, Cambridge 1914 (reprinted with an introduction by G. R. Elton, 1965) is still well