King James I
BIOGRAPHY

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AN INFANT KING.

James Charles Stuart was born on June 19, 1566 at Edinburg Castle in Scotland. His father, Lord Darnley, was murdered in early 1567 before young James was 1 year old. His mother, Mary Queen of Scots, was soon afterwards forced to abdicate the Scottish throne due to her suspected involvement in the murder. Little James was crowned King James VI of Scotland at the tender age of 13 months. Reformation leader John Knox preached the sermon at his coronation.

James' mother, Mary, was imprisoned in England by her cousin Queen Elizabeth and 19 years later, in February of 1587, was executed for her part in a Roman Catholic conspiracy to assassinate Queen Elizabeth.

And so, like many monarchs of the time, King James was reared by neither father nor mother (although he did maintain an ongoing correspondence with his mother. He said that she never tried to convert him to her religion.). Of his four tutors, perhaps one of the most influential was George Buchanan, a staunch Calvinist. It was under Mr. Buchanan's strict teaching methods that King James became one of the most learned and intellectually curious men to ever sit on any throne. Mr. Buchanan was 64 years old when he began tutoring the young king.

It was Greek before breakfast then Latin and history, composition, arithmetic cosmography, dialectics, rhetoric and of course, theology. King James spoke fluent Greek, Latin, French, English, and Scots and was schooled in Italian and Spanish. The King once remarked, that he could speak Latin before he could speak his native Scots. Because of his linguistic capabilities, King James typically did not need a translator when conducting business with other heads of state.
The stiff intellectual diet from George Buchanan was absorbed by a young boy who grew into a powerful man with a powerful pen. The Cambridge University press notes that the King's writings were among the most important and influential British writings of their period.

**KING JAMES BEGINS TO REIGN IN HIS NATIVE SCOTLAND.**

According to his *Workes of 1616* (a collection of the king's writings), King James began to rule his native Scotland when he was 12 years old. Then in 1589 he took Anne of Denmark to be his queen. King James loved his wife and wrote beautiful poetry for her. Together they had nine children. Once, when the King and Queen were out hunting, Queen Anne accidentally killed the King's favorite hunting dog, Jewell. The Queen felt badly about this and the King bought her a gift to ease her mind of this incident.

King James believed in the Divine Right of Kings and the monarch's duty to reign according to God's law and the public good. (James' defense of the divine right of kings is now often scorned and held in contempt; when, however, we examine his *Workes*, we find that the king's defense of the divine right was a loud, staunch protest against papal interference in kingdoms and the resulting Roman Catholic recusancy and murder of kings.)

In order to pass on his kingly instruction to his eldest son, Prince Henry, King James wrote *Basilicon Doron* which means, "the Kingly Gift". Basilicon Doron was not meant for general publication, but for the instruction of the young prince in the likely event that his father would not survive to instruct him--King James was sickly and survived a number of assassination attempts. The King bound his printer Robert Waldegrave to secrecy and ordered an edition of only seven copies. Somehow, however, intelligence of the book and its contents got abroad.

Subsequently, there was so much demand for Basilicon Doron that forged, corrupted copies were being distributed. With these pressures, the King then had it published for the general public and it became a bestseller. It was published in English, Welsh, Latin, French, Swedish and German for a period of over 50 years.

Basilicon Doron is a short treatise, only 153 pages long. It consists of three short volumes, the first of which is "A King's Christian Dutie Towards God." James D'israeli said, "James had formed the most elevated conception of the virtues and duties of a monarch."

In Basilicon Doron, King James' understanding of Christian discipleship, style and prose are at their best. He skillfully intertwines sacred scripture with godly and Christian advice. The King offers his son this important advice on knowing God:

"Diligently read his word, & earnestly...pray for the right understanding thereof. Search the scriptures saith Christ for they will bear testimony of me. The whole Scriptures saith Paul are profitable to teach, to improve, to correct, and to instruct in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect unto all good works."
"The whole Scripture contayneth but two things: a command and a prohibition. Obey in both... The worship of God is wholy grounded upon the Scripture, quickened by faith."

--King James
Basilicon Doron

THE KING UNITES THE ENGLISH AND SCOTTISH CROWNS.

King James' great aspiration to be the first King of both Scotland and England was realized in 1603 upon the death of Queen Elizabeth. When he ascended to the English throne that year he had already been king of Scotland for 36 years. He was now known as King James VI of Scotland & I of England.

THE KING HAD MANY ENEMIES.

As a Scotsman ruling over the English, the King endured much racism and slander--especially from the once powerful English Lords and Ladies who he replaced with his Scottish countrymen. Unfortunately, many of today's historians look to the writings of hostile sources such as Sir Anthony Weldon and Francis Osborne as accurate descriptions of this great king.

One of the king's detractors, Sir Anthony Weldon, was knighted by King James but was subsequently dismissed after King James found racist writings by Weldon about the King's native Scotland. Many historians today quote Weldon as if he were a reliable historical source. Examples of Weldon's racism are found in his treatise entitled, "A Perfect Description of the People and Country of Scotland" where he says that the Scots are a "stinking people" who hold "fornication...but a pastime". He also said,

"...their flesh naturally abhors cleanness. Their breath commonly stinks of pottage...to be chained in marriage with one of them, were to be tied to a dead carcass, and cast into a stinking ditch....I do wonder that...King James should be born in so stinking a town as Edinburgh in lousy Scotland."

Despite this obvious bias, historians continue to consult the writings of Anthony Weldon who intimated that King James had inordinate affections towards other men--but he did not do this until 25 years after King James was dead and could not defend himself. Today's sodomite/homosexual community is touting the King as one of their own, which he was not. These misinformed sources, virtually without exception, fail to mention that King James and his Queen had nine children together. You can read about the rumors in this article or check out an excellently researched book on the subject by Stephen Coston, Sr. entitled, King James: Unjustly Accused?

Almost prophetically, the king wrote of his enemies:

"They quarrel me (not for any evil or vice in me) but because I was a king, which they thought the highest evil, and because they were ashamed to profess this quarrel they were busy to look narrowly in all my actions, and I warrant you a moat in my eye, yes a false report was matter enough for them to work upon."
The Catholic religion was also an enemy of King James. Papists (as Roman Catholics were then known) attempted to assassinate him a number of times. Most notably, in 1605 Roman Catholic Guy Fawkes attempted to blow up Parliament when the king was to have been present. The conspiracy was discovered and Fawkes and co-conspirators were executed. This failed attempt is celebrated on November 5 in England each year and is known as Guy Fawkes Night.

King James was an evangelist of the true gospel, which automatically made him an enemy of Rome. King James strongly delineated the errors of Roman superstition and spurned them, yet he treated papists subjects fairly. Catholic ambassador Nicolo Molin said this of King James:

"He is a Protestant...the King tries to extend his Protestant religion to the whole island. The King is a bitter enemy of our religion. He frequently speaks of it in terms of contempt. He is all the harsher because of this last conspiracy against his life...He understood that the Jesuits had a hand in it."

Notwithstanding the calumniations of his detractors, King James the VI of Scotland and I of England was a highly successful King. He kept his kingdom out of war and for the first time a Scottish monarch wielded effective authority over the more far-flung areas of the realm. There was peace during his reign--both with his subjects and foreign powers. His motto was "Beati Pacifici,"--Blessed are the peacemakers.

As a lover of the theatre, King James became patron to the troop of one of his most famous subjects--William Shakespeare, the playwright. Shakespeare's troop came to be known as the King's Men. Shakespeare and the King held a special relationship as they both loved literature. Shakespeare even wrote his famous play, "Macbeth" specifically for King James.

FOUNDING MONARCH OF THE UNITED STATES.

In 1607, colonists sent by the Virginia Company arrived in Jamestowne, Virginia. Jamestowne (James' namesake) went on to become the first permanent English settlement on the American mainland making King James VI & I founding monarch of the United States. Jamestowne, established over a decade before the pilgrims landed in Massachusetts, is known today as "the place where America began". On a trip to JAMEStown, VA one can visit the site of "JAMES Forte" on the "JAMES River" in "JAMES City County" located on "JAMES Island".

King James VI and I is the founding monarch of the United States. Under his reign, we have the first successful colonies planted on the American mainland--Virginia, Massachusetts, and Nova Scotia (Latin for New Scotland) in SE Canada. The King himself ordered, wrote and authorized the Evangelistic Grant Charter to settle the Colony of Virginia:
"To make habitation...and to deduce a colony of sundry of our people into that part of America, commonly called Virginia...in propagating of Christian religion to such people as yet live in darkness...to bring a settled and quiet government."

CROWNING ACHIEVEMENT.

Not only was King James the first monarch to unite Scotland, England and Ireland into Great Britain (as he liked to call it), but he commanded what many consider to be the greatest piece of religious and literary work in the world--the Authorised (British spelling) Version. It is also known as the Authorized King James Bible. King James gave his subjects (and ultimately the world) the greatest gift he could--the Holy Bible so that they could be saved and fed from the Word of God.

In January of 1604, the King called the Hampton Court Conference in order to hear of things "pretended to be amiss" in the church. At this conference, Dr. John Reynolds, a Puritan, requested of the King a new translation of the Bible because those that were allowed during the reigns of Henry the VIII and Edward the VI were corrupt.

The King loved the idea and by July of 1604 the King had appointed 54 men to the translation committee. These men were not only the best linguists and scholars in the kingdom, but in the world. Much of their work on the King James Bible formed the basis for our linguistic studies of today.

The translators were organized into six groups and met respectively at Westminster, Cambridge, and Oxford. This group of great scholars had qualifications such as have not been rivaled before or after them. They spent most of their lifetimes in the pursuit of God and knowledge. One translator, Dr. Lancelot Andrews, mastered at least 15 languages and by the time he was 6 years old, he had read the entire Bible in Hebrew. Others on the translation committee were just as qualified. Some wrote foreign language dictionaries and lexicons, they commonly debated in Greek, they translated and edited great works and wrote their own. These are but a few of their fantastic accomplishments. They not only knew the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek biblical languages but also the related languages that shed light on them such as Arabic, Persian, Coptic, Syriac, Latin, Chaldee, Spanish, French, Italian, and Dutch.

These men were not only world class scholars, they were Christians who lived holy lives as Deans and Presidents of major universities such as Oxford, Cambridge, and Westminster. Some prayed 5 hours a day.

Their translation work did not go without opposition. According to the translator's notes in the preface of the King James Bible, the Roman Catholic religion was dead set against translating the Bible into the common tongue. Popery proved to be one of the translators' chief enemies. The translators wrote of the Roman Catholic institution--

"So much are they afraid of the light of the scripture, that they will not trust the people with it...Sure we are that not he that hath the good gold, that is afraid to bring it to the touchstone, but he that hath the counterfeit."
Despite the opposition of the Roman Catholic institution, the work continued and the end product was nothing short of miraculous. Many consider the commanding of the Authorized King James Version of the Bible the crowning achievement of King James the VI and & I. The Authorized King James Bible is known as the Authorised Version (British spelling) in Great Britain. It was published in 1611--this link commemorates the 400th year anniversary of the Authorised Version and includes much fascinating history in a concise, short format.

Upon its publication, the King James or Authorized Version eclipsed all previous and subsequent versions. It is the best-selling book of all time. Today there are a plethora of Bible versions available (not all believe that those "older and better" Greek manuscripts are authentic)--yet for many Christians the King James Bible of 1611 is the absolute and final word of God.

THE KING'S WRITINGS.

King James wrote extensively on a variety of subjects. Fortunately, in 1616, the bishop of his chapel compiled many of the king's writings into one volume entitled, "The Workes of the Most High and Mightie Prince, Iames, by the Grace of God, King of Great Britaine, France and Ireland, Defender of the Faith, &c. (in Jacobean typography, the letter "I" can represent "I" or "J". Iames = James) In reading The Workes, we find that although King James was a highly learned scholar and statesman, his writings are forthright, cogent, lively, interesting, unpretentious, and easy to read. An excellent summary of these fascinating works can be found here.

In The Workes, one finds that King James was a contender for the faith of Jesus Christ and cared about the spiritual well-being of his kingdom. He even wrote Christian meditations for his people and his court. His writings are still relevant today and are important sources for understanding the nature of law and government--and the times in which we live today.

The King James Bible translators reference the king's writings in the Epistle Dedicatory of the King James Bible--

...the zeal of Your Majesty toward the house of God doth not slack or go backward, but is more and more kindled, manifesting itself abroad in the farthest parts of Christendom, by writing in defence of the Truth, (which hath given such a blow unto that man of sin, as will not be healed,) and every day at home, by religious and learned discourse, by frequenting the house of God, by hearing the Word preached, by cherishing the Teachers thereof, by caring for the Church, as a most tender and loving nursing Father.

This appears to be a reference to the king's writings in regards to the usurping tendencies of the Roman Catholic papacy, writings which set Europe aflame. Maurus Lunn, member of the Benedictine order, said this about the ensuing controversy,

"Fought by paper tigers, it was a paper war that penetrated every corner of Europe, the like of which will probably never be seen again...." 

This summary of The Workes puts the King's writings in perspective.
PHYSICAL AILMENTS.

Although King James had a life filled with accomplishments, he was a man acquainted with grief. He was a sickly man who had physical handicaps in his legs and a tongue that was too large for his mouth. As a result of his unsteady gait, the king had numerous falls, accidents and injuries. He suffered from crippling arthritis, abdominal colic, gout, inability to sleep, weak/spasmic limbs, nausea, frequent diarrhea, and kidney pain. Some believe that he may have had congenital diseases of the nervous system. Sometimes the pain was so great that the king became delirious.

To add to his ill-health, the king suffered from depression from the loss of his beloved wife Queen Anne in 1619. She was preceded in death by their eldest son, Prince Henry in 1612. The King was no stranger to pain and sorrow. The sun set on King James the great monarch on March 27, 1625 at Theobolds Park in Herts, England. He was 58 years old when he died and was buried at Westminster Abbey. Unlike many Scottish monarchs, King James died in his bed at peace with his subjects and foreign countries. He also passed royal power on, intact, to an adult son which was also quite unusual.

Though he died almost 400 years long ago, the King's legacy, the King James Bible continues to flourish and to bring men, women, boys and girls to a life-saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.