

Diana Newton. *The Making of the Jacobean Regime: James VI and I and the Government of England, 1603-1605*. Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2005. x + 164 pp. \$80.00. Review by CHARLES W. A. PRIOR, UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE.

King James VI and I has tended to suffer at the hands of historians. Described by a contemporary as the wisest fool in England, the impression that has come down through the centuries is of an unprepossessing closet homosexual with horrid table manners and a flair for penning pedantic treatises on the evils of tobacco. The scholarship that covers the years of his English reign (1603-25) has tended to dwell on topics other than his manner of rule. James is presumed to have governed a realm characterised by a bland climate of peace. Were it not for a few juicy court scandals and the Gunpowder plot, we would be tempted to remember this strange king as an avid hunter and amateur scholar who stares warily back at us from several portraits of the time. He is, in other words, often treated as a warm-up act for the main event: the disastrous reign of his faulted second son and “spare” to the throne, Charles I.

The tide has begun to turn. Scholars such as Jenny Wormald, Brown Patterson, Maurice Lee, and Linda Peck, among others, have offered careful discussions of James’ mode of rule in both Scotland and England, his ambitions for a pan-European Protestantism, and his court as a political machine in the manner of the early Tudor household. This book, published as part of the Royal Historical Society’s new series of “Studies in History,” builds upon this work as well as that on the “new” British history, in order to provide a compact analysis of how James made the transition from king of Scotland to the first British ruler of multiple kingdoms.

The book opens with a brief discussion of James’ early years as King of Scotland, a throne he inherited in 1567 at the age of thirteen months. The sixteenth century had seen another boy king, Edward VI, and recent scholars have shown the degree to which the fact of his youth did not inhibit his interest in the business of government. Newton reminds us that James had never known a time when he was not king, and this bred in him a confidence and sense of moderation that was essential to rule. Indeed, he ruled with patience, balancing factions in Scotland, especially those defined by religion in general and Catholicism in particular. The transition to power discussed by

the second chapter shows how James prepared the ground in England as he made his way gradually south after the death of Elizabeth I in March of 1603. “30” (James) wrote a barrage of coded letters to “10”–Robert Cecil– and to “deer 3”–Henry Howard, among the counsellors most loyal to “24” (Elizabeth), and thus well placed to prevent disaffected English nobles from forming a hostile faction. Good use is made here and throughout of letters and other archival sources, which together show James as a keen student of English government, seeking to reassure those wary of him that no great alteration of “law or custom” was in the offing. Yet Newton argues that, for all of this preparation, James nevertheless misjudged the political climate of England. There was the problem of the Church of England, established in Protestantism in 1559 yet rejected by many Protestants for leaning too close to Rome and by all Catholics as being a church that was the product of human custom and law, having no connection with the *corpus mysticum* that was the true church. Added to this were the problems of war and commerce and the tenuous balance of power in Europe along confessional lines, a balance that would be disrupted in 1618. Then there was the political structure of England as a combination of centre (London), localities, regional issues, and borderlands that had challenged the business of governing since Henry VI.

Of these, it is religion which presented James with his most serious challenges, and these are discussed in two chapters that examine the response to the Canons of 1604–wildly unpopular measures designed to impose some order on the Church of England. The problem was that they re-opened old wounds concerning liturgy, ceremonial practice, and rule of the Church by bishops. It was along these lines that English and Scottish Protestants found common cause, furnishing us with a test case for what John Morrill and others have called the “British problem.” In Northamptonshire the local magnates got up a petition protesting the use of the court of High Commission as a means of turfing out non-conformist ministers, and this touched off a flurry of petitioning and pamphleteering, and the spread of virulent anti-Catholicism. What prevented a civil war was James’ decision to act swiftly by tightening local controls, and in these pages we discover a wealth of material on the functioning of the Jacobean “regime” at all levels.

A final chapter offers an assessment of the Jacobean “legacy” as it respected finance, parliament, religion, and local government—the main topics

around which the narrative is arranged. At this point one begins to wonder if this hitherto careful, compact, and balanced study of a confined patch of historical turf has not begun to overstretch itself. For it is disingenuous to speak of anything approaching a legacy—let alone an “enduring legacy”—when the book itself deals almost entirely with a period of two years. There were twenty more to come, and it might be argued that the “addled parliament,” the Synod of Dort, the debate over the Perth Articles, and the failure of the Spanish Match were what defined the Jacobean legacy, for these were the events that shaped political, religious, and diplomatic history in the period after 1625. This is not to deny that the conflicts of 1603 to 1605 continued to reverberate—an even cursory examination of pamphlets and other books shows that they did—but to these issues were joined others, and it is only after James’ death in 1625 that one can begin to imagine what his legacy truly was. Nevertheless, this book is a fine first step in a history that has yet to be written, and it provides a detailed and well-balanced account of a crucial and neglected bit of early Stuart history.

Frances Harris and Michael Hunter, eds. *John Evelyn and His Milieu*. London: The British Library, 2003. ix + 298 pp. + 62 illus. \$70.00. Review by CHRISTOPHER BAKER, ARMSTRONG ATLANTIC STATE UNIVERSITY.

Of the two great seventeenth-century English diarists, Samuel Pepys has probably garnered more attention since his death than has John Evelyn. Conflicted, ambitious, petty, secretive, and driven, Pepys is the more visceral and dramatic of the two when compared to the scholarly, observant, pious, artistic, and cosmopolitan Evelyn. But comparisons here are odious. Evelyn deserves to be appreciated for the unique sensibility he offers, especially when one views him, as this volume does, beyond the confines of his diary alone. “No one says Evelyn was a great thinker,” remark the editors (15), but there is no mistaking the cultured catholicity of his tastes and interests. As his contemporary William Rand commented, his “sprightly curiosity left nothing unreacht into, in the vast all-comprehending Dominions of Nature and Art” (155). This volume, comprising an introductory essay and fourteen studies of Evelyn in varying contexts, documents Rand’s statement with varied breadth.

Evelyn was an accomplished bookman, and three essays examine his