

The enigma that was the first Jacobite/Alastair J. Mann

Let no man miss his glas by stealth
but all with one consent agree
to drink a brimmer to the health
of James the duke of Albany

This optimistic song was sung in 1680 by Scotland's bishops as they toasted the health of James, duke of Albany and York, before he became King James VII of Scotland and II of England. This is the king removed at the Revolution of 1689, exiled to France and, through the Latin of his name, the founding father of Jacobitism. Jacobitism, like all political labels, is an idea at the behest of the user. It has been subjected to mythmaking planted in the fertile soil of Scotland's history: the bravery of highlanders, anti-Englishness and resentment at the death of clan society, for example. Essentially, Jacobitism was a minority sport with most Scots in the eighteenth century favouring the Hanoverian regime. The romanticism of the Jacobite Highlander, however compelling, has created exaggerated ideas of patriotism when both sides thought they were patriots who sat nearest to God. Oddly, James has been almost forgotten in the pantheon of Jacobite leaders, an unfortunate embarrassment to the cause. He became a Catholic when kings of England and Scotland had to be Protestant and his inadequacies initiated the monarchical crisis. On the other hand, in more ways than label making, initially Jacobitism needed its James.

The above song comes to us through Sir William Stewart of Newton Stewart when writing to his London associates in February 1680. Stewart was reporting the welcome James received in Scotland, exiled as a result of the Exclusion Crisis, the attempt by English parliamentarians to exclude the Catholic James from succeeding his brother Charles II. Stewart also sought to quash various rumours, including that the ears of one of the duke's servants had been cut off. Far from this, one of James's English servants had been wandering around Edinburgh drunk. On being challenged by a Scottish officer on watch, the servant responded in a saucy manner, was locked up for the night and released in the morning. As a result of this James sacked his servant and thanked the soldier. In another incident Scotland's commander-in-chief General Thomas Dalrymple ordered that a guard be shot for falling asleep at the gate of Edinburgh's Holyrood Palace as James entered. The sentence was remitted at the James's special request. These incidents and the bishops' song confirm the generalised attachment James had for Scottish soldiers and clergy on royal service.

In 1956 Don Pottinger, the Scottish herald and illustrator, produced a cartoon of James's saintly parts parceled up for distribution. This was a visual pun on the fate of James's body post-mortem. Before he died in September 1701 James asked to be buried at the parish church of St-Germain-en-Laye west of Paris, very close to the palace of his French exile, but King Louis XIV had other ideas. He insisted that James's body was embalmed and placed in a triple coffin to preserve it for eventual burial at Westminster Abbey. It was kept by the English Benedictine monks of Paris but unfortunately in 1793 was removed by French revolutionaries and became a tourist attraction before being destroyed

the following year. The day after James's death the embalming process took place and those present took various relics— flesh from his arms, his hair, his heart, his brain and numerous blood-soaked linen cloths (many of which still survive). The heart went to the nuns of Chaillot near Paris (a favoured haunt of his second wife Mary of Modena), his brain to the Scots College in Paris (where Scottish priests were trained) and his entrails were divided between the parish church of St-Germain (and are still there) and the English Jesuit College of St Omer near Calais - all these survived the French Revolution. This is because many Jacobites and sympathetic Frenchmen regarded James as a saint. It was believed that the intercession of 'St Roy d'Angleterre' led to dozens of cases where individuals were cured of afflictions.

The trouble with James is that he is at the centre of so much debate —the comparisons with his father and brother Charles, the fact of the 1689 revolution itself, the birth and progress of Jacobitism and the parliamentary union between England and Scotland in 1707. And then we have absolutism, kings versus parliaments, Whigs versus Tories, the growth of the slave trade out of west Africa, to which he was committed when gold and ivory were posted missing, and the apparent victory of Protestantism over Catholicism. He is steeped in a stew of historical controversy.

Life made the prince. James was born at St James's Palace in London in 1633, at the height of Charles I's authoritarianism and just after he returned from his coronation parliament in Edinburgh. James had a happy enough childhood, though he was better at his bow and arrow than his pen, before the protracted wars against his father were begun by the Scottish covenanters in 1639. His father was reserved and his mother Henrietta Maria rigid, who always compared him unfavorably with his brother Charles, although in the 1650s French women seemed to prefer James's greater sincerity and better French. After the English Civil War commenced in 1643 James was sporadically with his father but in 1646 became a parliamentary prisoner. Nevertheless, in 1648 he escaped to the Continent and spent four years a frustrated man of action, unable to save his father from execution or restore the monarchy in the name of his brother. However, from 1652 to 1658 James served and commanded in the armies of France and Spain and though young showed remarkable ability and bravery. In 1660, after the death of Oliver Cromwell and the collapse of government by the army, he and his brothers Charles and Henry were welcomed back, the population weary of English military rule. James was very popular and provided re-assurance over the royal succession. He became English Lord Admiral in the Anglo-Dutch war of the 1660s, showing great courage under fire. Also, in what seemed to confirm him as a champion of the Protestant Church of England, he married Anne Hyde, daughter of Clarendon the English chancellor, a stalwart Anglican. So, when news spread of his Catholic conversion in the early 1670s there was popular disappointment and not a little disbelief. The political fallout was further aggravated when it became clear that Charles II and his wife Catherine were not going to have children, and Charles II made sure that James's daughters Mary and Anne were educated as Protestants and away from Catholic influence. The fact that James's second wife, married in 1673, was the Italian Catholic Mary of Medina, further depressed James's reputation. By 1679 England was in the grip of the Exclusion Crisis and a period of exile in Scotland was seen by Charles as a solution, and for most of the time from October

1679 to March 1682 James resided in Edinburgh, and presided over the Edinburgh parliament in 1681. Contemporaries viewed this time in Scotland as a success, and the Scottish Parliament confirmed his right to the succession and he did much else to aid Scotland, especially in economic affairs. So, when he became king in 1685 his succession was warmly welcome, the parliament of 1685 went well, and it was only in the 1686 session that the question of toleration for Catholics raised its head and became a political problem. He failed to get the parliament to agree to statutory toleration but simply introduced it by royal proclamation, in spite of opposition from half his bishops. Then, miraculously as he saw it, in the summer of 1688 a son James Francis Edward was born to him, a Catholic succession was now threatened, and so the anticipated succession of the Protestants William of Orange and James's daughter Mary was now in danger. Within a few months, revolution came and James fled into exile in December 1688. He and his second family then set up at the Château Vieux de St-Germain-en-Laye. When there, James soon realized, after a failed Irish military adventure, that his own restoration was unlikely. To begin with he used diplomacy, convoluted plots, the inconsistent interest of Louis XIV, the Pope and other Catholic powers, but from 1693 settled down to concluding years of acceptance, piety and submission to his faith. The future belonged to his son.

To what extent then was James a prince of Scotland? He had no property there, akin to his extensive Irish estates, or official English residences when duke, such as Richmond Palace in London. Yet Scotland was by no means ignored. From the 1660s James became the champion of Scottish Protestant bishops and supported them in their disputes with Presbyterianism. He approved their appointments, even when known to be Catholic, and backed their calls for measures to clamp down on conventicles, the illegal field meetings of the more extreme Covenanters. While the Covenanters condemned James as a Catholic bigot, a view supported by most historical writing in the last 300 years, more recently he has been seen, through his own writings and efforts to facilitate liberty of conscience to those loyal to the crown, as more a believer in toleration than his religious enemies ever conceded.

James was also, more expectedly, the most significant patron for military appointments in Scotland. He kept good relations with the Scottish officer class, some of whom he came across in the 1650s. Amongst Catholics was Andrew Rutherford, earl of Teviot who had served in the 1640s and 1650s under the famous French generals the Prince of Condé and Marshall Turenne. At the Restoration James ensured Rutherford was elevated to the peerage and made governor of Tangier in 1663. Another of the same confessional background but of a different generation was Thomas Buchan, later a Jacobite army officer, who had seen service with France in the 1660s and 1670s. Protestant officers also came under James's patronage. William Drummond of Cromlix, viscount Strathallan and Thomas Dalzell of Binns, were Civil War veterans with parallel careers. Both served under the Covenanters in the 1640s and for Charles II in 1651 (when both were captured and then escaped), after which they spent a decade of Russia service for Tsar Alexi I. On James's advice, when they returned home in 1665, Dalzell was made commander-in-chief in Scotland with Drummond his major general.

James's relations with Scottish soldiery can be illustrated through the careers of two contrasting individuals, Sir James Turner and John Graham of Claverhouse, Viscount Dundee, immortalised as 'Bonnie Dundee'. Turner began in Swedish service before joining the army of the covenanters in the 1640s. At the Restoration, coming under James's wing, he was appointed a major in the king's foot guards in Scotland. Claverhouse, a Protestant like Turner, served for the French against the Dutch under the overall command of Marshall Turenne, before changing sides in 1674. He then came to the attention of James who ensured he was given command of a troop of horse in Scotland in 1678. He was subsequently ordered to subdue Scotland's covenanting south-west in 1678-9. Thereafter, he was regularly in the company of James and Charles in London.

In the Restoration period James's own military reputation rested more on his naval career than his early army experiences, even though there was little scope for such adventures in Scotland. Nevertheless, he was appointed Lord Admiral of Scotland, in the very year he resigned from the English equivalent on account of the Protestant Test oath he could not take, and this left some possibilities for patronage in Scotland, as well as confirming exclusion was mostly an English objective. James took the chance to appoint trusted royal servants to Scottish admiralty positions and also advised the 1681 Scottish parliament on a new statute of jurisdiction for the admiralty court which remarkably remained in place until 1830.

The other Scottish interest that James had before his residence in Edinburgh was over international trade. With his colonial territories in New York and his investment in the great English trading companies he understood how important this could be for potential Scottish investors. Accordingly, James was able to convince the English Privy Council to allow Scots from the 1670s to share in the activities of the Royal Africa Company and Hudson Bay Company and to trade freely with New York. Also, in spite of many future difficulties he supported and authorised new Scottish trading colonies in South Carolina (1682) and East New Jersey (1685).

Culturally, when James was resident in Scotland he participated in its national pastimes. Frustratingly for him, it being his main diversion, the hunting in Scotland was modest, however he went riding most days and watched horse racing at Leith in 1680. He proved himself an excellent golfer and played regularly on Leith links. At one point he took as his partner a shoemaker called Paterson who was a sensation at the game and the pair won prize money for their efforts. James also learnt curling in the local frozen lochs. He patronised the foundation of the Royal College of Physicians in Edinburgh in 1681 and re-created, from probable fifteenth century origins, the Order of the Thistle, Scotland's order of chivalry to compete with England's Order of the Garter. He was the driving force behind the commissioning of 111 portraits of the kings of Scots by the Dutch painter Jacob de Wet II. These were hung at Holyrood (and still are), only to be damaged by disgruntled English soldiers in 1746. While this collection is of dubious artistic and historical merit it represents an extraordinary example of royalist iconography, a theme dear to James's heart. Indeed, painting offered artistic reinforcement of his political

beliefs. His concept of Scotland within the imperial crown is revealed in his commissioning of Nicolas de Largilliere's rococo portrait of St Margaret, the 11th century queen of Scotland. This devotional composition of 1692 became the centrepiece of James's art collection at St-Germain and represented the bridge between God and the Stuarts. What better statement of legitimacy?

On the parliamentary union of Scotland and England, so problematic of course in the 21st century, James had passively supported the idea when it was fleetingly a policy of his brother Charles, but after the revolution, though, he made very clear his opposition. The Jacobite logic is contained in an anonymous 'Treatise of advice to a Catholic King': '[Scots] are so loyally affected that they want but an occasion to declare for the King & against the Union'. This is emphasised by James's own 'Advice to his Son' of April 1692, penned before the aborted Jacobite invasion of the British Isles that year and in case he lost life or liberty. He states: 'tis the true interest of the crown to keep the kingdom separate from England'. Those who support union should be seen as 'weake men, bribed by some private concern'. If it was subsumed into England, as in the time of Cromwell, Scotland as a 'great supporter' of the crown would be lost forever. Essentially, Union clashed with James's ideas of an imperial regal union where the person of the monarch would protect Scottish interests. Such sentiments for Scotland in the Union of the Crowns represented the great and often unfulfilled royalist hope of the seventeenth century.

James's surviving private devotional papers confirm why in practical political terms he failed to show sufficient drive to re-take his kingdoms. He saw misfortune and especially the revolution in 1689, as a judgement on his personal behaviour. Just as the Almighty delivered his survival on the battlefields of Europe in the 1650s, the sea campaigns against the Dutch in the 1660s and 1670s, the crown in 1685 and most remarkably a son and heir in 1688, so God took his thrones from him. James's faith explains his response to political events. He never accepted that his faith was the problem and he was unable to reconcile his apparent belief in liberty of conscience with his religious goals. Yet, not since James VI had a monarch been so willing to engage with Scottish affairs, be they economic, military, cultural or, less promisingly, religious.

In terms of character James presents as a compulsive obsessive. In 1685 he produced a complex and lengthy list of instructions for the servants of his bedchamber; in the same year, when the Scottish parliament met, he issued a veritable blitzkrieg of 12 sets of instructions to his new high commissioner the duke of Queensberry, and in 1696 he gave a long list of instructions to James, Earl of Perth, Governor to the future Old Pretender, on how to bring up the royal boy. Nonetheless, at a personal level James had redeeming features. Physically he was handsome, a brilliant horseman, brave in combat situations and never short of female company. He was, perhaps, too honest and loyal to master the necessary pragmatism required of a great political manager like his brother. He also had some of the qualities of a medieval king and he and the more famous James IV, who died at Flodden fighting for the French against the English, would have had much in common. Well might James and that renaissance prince have shared preoccupations with military tactics and knightly valour. James IV was nevertheless a victim of the Anglo-Scottish

problem, just as the kings and queens of the Union of the Crowns were of the puzzle that was the three kingdoms, and whatever can be said of our King James he was not a solution to that conundrum.

It is probably fair to sum up James as follows: after a promising start, in later life he fixated on explaining his fate and religion was the answer. He was not incompetent just sinful. His major failures were of course political in nature, however, attempting a radical process of religious reform without adequate support, learning little from the fates of Mary Queen of Scots and Charles I. His launching of the Jacobite cause was not merely ineffectual but helped condemn his northern kingdom to over a half century of sporadic conflict. While he undoubtedly saw himself as Scottish by dynastic birth right, such a legacy explains his mottled reputation in historiography, if not the more general negatively that takes no account of his cultural and economic interests in Scotland, and even an inclination towards religious toleration in both Scotland and England. He remains therefore an enigmatic prince.

Suggested reading

Tim Harris, *Revolution: The Great Crisis of the British Monarchy, 1685-1720* (London, 2006)

Alastair J. Mann, *James VII: Duke and King of Scots, 1633-1701* (Edinburgh, 2014)

David L. Smith, *A History of the Modern British Isles, 1603-1707: The Double Crown* (Oxford, 1998).