Absolutism in the History of Political Thought :
The Case of King James VI and I

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Abstract

In the first half of the paper, I demonstrate that king James VI and I, who is known as a representative thinker of absolutism, also stressed a king's duty to govern well for the people ; and that this ambiguity of his political thought has recently begotten a revisionist interpretation, which argues that in fact James avowed a limited monarchy.   After criticising this revisionist interpretation, and turning to the question of why James referred frequently to the Christian Bible, I define his version of absolutism, which sets itself up as the orthodox inheritor of European intellectual tradition, in contrast to the versions of absolutism of Jean Bodin and Thomas Hobbes.

In June 1642 on the eve of the civil war, the second English Stuart monarch Charles I, who succeeded his father, the Scottish monarch James VI and also the English monarch James I, issued a document in his name titled *His Majesty's Answer to the Nineteen Propositions*.[1]   It was short, but later historians recognized that it was very important in the history of English political thought.   The document was epoch-making, because the English constitution was for the first time officially described as a mixed government, which consisted of three parts with different functions, based on the theory of the ancient Greek historian Polybius.[2]   It might be seen that the theory of moderate monarchy grafted onto ancient political thought made a sudden entry into the political scene, because his father king James VI and I is famous as an advocate of divine right absolutism.   However, James also set his politics to be a direct descendant of ancient political thought, and his absolutism was not in fact absolute in the strict sense that monarchs can do anything they want.   In this paper, I investigate James's political thought and its position in the history of western political thought.   It is certain that in James's opinion, a monarch is accountable not to subjects, but only to God ; thus people have no rights to resist, or even to

dispute royal sovereignty.   However, this very feature of the accountability to God also limits royal power, which makes his theory ambiguous.   James's political thought was double-decked, and constituted of both the theory of sovereignty and that of a just government.

1

It is true that king James VI and I frequently emphasized in his works that the royal prerogative was derived immediately from God.   According to him, its testimony is the Christian Bible, and this means that monarchy is the best form of government.   Because a monarch is 'God's lieutenant' and sits upon God's throne on the earth endowed with divinity, a monarchical government exercises a 'resemblance of Divine power upon earth.'   Monarchs are 'judges over all their subjects and in all causes, and yet accountable to none but God only' (1598 : 64–5, 72 ; 1599 : 2, 45, 60 ; 1604 : 142–3 ; 1605 : 148 ; 1610 : 181–2 ; 1616 : 204–5 ; 1620 : 234, 237–8, 241).[3]   In James's opinion, this means that no subject, lawyer, or parliament may resist, intervene with, or even discuss royal prerogative.   '[A]s to dispute what God may do, is blasphemy ; [. . .] So is it sedition in subjects, to dispute what a king may do in the height of his power' (1610 : 184).[4]   Even an evil tyrant must be regarded as God's gift, so that everyone has to submit to the government without exception. Here, James relied on ancient Jewish history in the Bible to explain the origin and the character of monarchical government, using the famous story of the coronation of Saul in the first Book of Samuel.   The people resisted God and wanted him to let them have a king even in exchange for 'renouncing for ever all privileges.'   Because the people of God agreed to live under a monarchy on condition that they would submit even to a tyrannical monarch, people are thereafter forbidden any resistance and complaint even if 'a wicked king is sent by God for a curse to his people' (1598 : 66–82).[5]

However, the accountability to God introduces another feature of monarchical government. It obliges monarchs to govern according to Divine law, and to govern for the welfare of the country and the people.   Precisely because royal power is derived from God, it should be executed according not to the king's arbitrary will, but to the Creator's will.   As James's instruction book for his young prince, *Basilikon Doron* (the king's gift), started with a detailed explanation of a monarch's duty to God, James emphasized this aspect of the prerogative.   It is not an easy task for monarchs.   If they fail, God will punish them severely in the next world in proportion to the greatness of their worldly office (1598 : 83 ; 1599 : 12–3, 17–9 ; 1610 : 183–4 ; 1620 : 231, 239–40).   Kings can do anything, but must nonetheless choose to do right things.   This ambiguity of the royal prerogative can be best seen in its relationship to its laws.   It is certain that

according to James, only a monarch as 'Lex loquens [a speaking law]' can make laws.   Since 'the kings were the authors and makers of the laws, and not the laws of the kings,' 'the king is above the law, as both the author and giver of strength thereto.'   However, 'certainly a king that governs not by his law, can neither be accountable to God for his administration, nor have a happy and established reign.'   To perform his duty 'a good king will not only delight to rule his subjects by the law, but even will conform himself in his own actions thereto' (1598 : 73-5).[6]

James introduces a distinction between a just monarch and a tyrant to clarify the point.[7] The former, 'a lawful good king,' 'acknowledges himself ordained for the people, having received from God a burden of government, whereof he must be countable.'   He 'employs all his study and pains, to procure and maintain, by the making and execution of good laws, the welfare and peace of his people.'   Therefore a good king can be called 'the great servant of the common-wealth.' On the other hand, the latter, 'an usurping Tyran[t],' who 'thinks his people ordained for him' will 'frame the common-weal ever to advance his particular : building his surety upon his people's misery' (1599 : 20-1 ; 1604 : 142-4).   James persisted in holding this distinction.   In 1610, when James professed that he now possessed total knowledge of English government after reigning for seven years,[8] he added a historical explanation of the obligation of a just monarch.   Whereas 'kings in their original' governed according to their will, yet after 'kingdoms began to be settled in civility and policy,' kings governed according to the laws of the kingdom.   Otherwise, 'a king governing in a settled kingdom, leaves to be a king, and degenerates into a tyrant.'   'Therefore all kings that are not tyrants, or perjured, will be glad to bound themselves within the limits of their laws' (1610 : 183-4).[9]   In short, there is 'reciprocal and mutual duty' between 'a free and absolute monarch' and 'his natural subjects' : a duty of the monarch to care for the people, and a duty of the people to submit to the monarch (1598 : 62, 64, 84).[10]

2

We have seen two faces of James's theory of royal power.   To possess sovereignty derived from God means not only to have the right to govern, but also to have a duty to govern well for the public interest.   It could be said that this ambiguity of James's political thought has recently begotten various interpretations.   While James had for a long time been famous as one of the representative thinkers of absolutism under the influence of Charles H. McIlwain who republished James's works in 1918,[11] some revisionist historians have stressed the moderate character of James's prerogative theory.[12]   According to Jenny Wormald, James's absolutism must be read simply as a response to the Scottish political tradition, which he had in fact no

intention of applying to England.[13]   This implies that the ambiguity of James's thought was due to his coming to England.   James's conversion in political theory was also alleged and reinforced by Paul Christianson, who sees 1610 as a turning point of James's thought.   According to Christianson, James needed such a different discourse from absolutism for governing England that after he possessed knowledge of English law and government he asserted a theory of 'constitutional monarchy created by kings,' in which the monarch initiates but obeys the laws. What James as an English king avowed was interpreted as another version of the theory of ancient constitutionalism, contrary to other versions based either on the theory of an immemorial limited monarchy by common lawyers such as Edward Coke, or on the Teutonist theory of mixed monarchy by John Selden.[14]

However, it is impossible to interpret James as having an absolutist Scottish face in his early days and a moderate English face in his later days, for he showed both faces even in his early Scottish days, as is confirmed in the textual sources indicated above.[15]   James avowed the absolute royal prerogative and the need of care for common weal at the same time throughout his reign, not one after the another.   He never withdrew the ideas that only a monarch has the power to make and repeal laws, and that a monarch is accountable to none except God.   It is important to reconfirm here that in James's consistent opinion, even if a monarch fails to govern well for the people and the country, there is no way for subjects to protest, much less to resist. Subjects are permitted to have no political power.   It is true that a monarch at the coronation 'willingly promises to the people, to discharge honorably and truly the office given him by God over them,' but 'God is doubtless the only judge, [...] because to him only the king must make count of his administration (as is often said before),' which means that 'any rebellion of people' due to poor government ought not to be allowed.   Moreover, James did not hesitate in professing that 'all men of understanding must agree, that I might dispose without assent of parliament, offices of judicature, and others, both ecclesiastical and temporal' (1598 : 81-2 ; 1607 : 165 ; 1610 : 183-4).   Thus, moderate government is not institutionally guaranteed, but exists merely by the good will of the monarch.   '[A] good king will frame all his actions to be according to the law ; yet is he not bound thereto but of his good will' (1598 : 75).[16]   In short, if we focus on where the political power exists in James's view of monarchy, the government must be regarded as nothing but an absolute monarchy with a good king.[17]   As a result, in case of a contradiction between the two 'faces' of James's theory, that is, if the demand for use of the absolute power comes into conflict with the duty to care for the people, the former has priority.   Anarchy due to lack of sovereignty was much worse than a tyrannical government (1598 : 79). The right to govern absolutely and the duty to govern well can be said to stand hierarchically, the former as an

essential base and the latter as an additional goal in a settled monarchy.[18]   Interestingly, this structure of James's absolutism is similar to Jean Bodin's theory of sovereignty.   Bodin, whom James had read carefully,[19] avowed absolute sovereignty on the one hand, and on the other argued that it should be limited for a just government, though without permitting subjects a right of resistance.   Both thinkers agreed that tyranny is better than anarchy.[20]

Like Bodin's theory, James's was a theoretical response to the civil wars due to religious conflict over true Christianity.   From James's point of view, the main enemies were the Roman Catholics and the Puritans, both of which wished to intervene with the king's civil power in the name of true religion,[21] rather than the constitutionalism of English common lawyers who have traditionally been regarded as his main opponents since McIlwain's study.[22]   In brief, James's absolutism was mainly constructed against religionists' doctrine that unjust kings that diverged from the true Christianity should be disciplined or deposed by the spiritual power.   Church and priests must not meddle with the state, as on the contrary 'it is the king's office to oversee and compel the *Church* to do her office' (1599 : 45 ; 1620 : 237 ; 1622 : 257).   While Bodin and James thus shared the common problem to be solved, James chose a different approach from Bodin.[23]   Bodin separated politics and religion because he thought pursuit of true religion had begotten civil wars, whereas James dared to pursue the true knowledge of Christianity and to set political power on the foundation of the true religion ; in his opinion the source of disorder had been wrong and distorted understandings of the Bible and Christianity.   He willingly entered into an ideological war over true Christianity in an attempt to win the battle.

According to James, because God's will can only be known through reading the Bible,[24] we must distinguish 'between the express commandment and will of God in his word, and the invention or ordinance of man,' and must not resort to any other 'than is warranted by the word.' He warns his subjects not to depend 'upon the credit of your own conceits, nor yet of other men's humors, how great doctors of Divinity that ever they be' : the former of which is 'an arrogant vanity' of the Puritans, whereas the latter 'an ignorant fantasy' of the Catholics (1599 : 13-9).[25] James maintained that it was not resistance, but absolute obedience to earthly power that the Bible teaches.   To contend otherwise is 'a strange and new assertion,' for 'I read indeed and not in one, or two, or three places of Scripture, that subjects are bound to obey their princes for conscience sake, whether they were good or wicked princes' (1608 : 93).   Whereas Roman Catholics are 'falsely called Catholics, but truly Papists,' the truth is 'my faith is the true, ancient, catholic, and apostolic faith, grounded upon the Scriptures and express word of God' (1604 : 138, 140).   James intended to demonstrate that his political theory was the genuine offspring of Christianity.

That James had to confront the Roman Church and the Puritans explains the reason why he had to refer persistently to God and the Bible in his political theory.   The point is that by invoking the Bible James was to appropriate the authority of God as his own, thus ensuring that the Church has it but only through him.   He needed to deploy the symbol of God as a trump card to win the battle against spiritual powers who pretended it was only theirs.   According to James, it is not the Church nor the priests but the monarch who is 'God's lieutenant' on earth.   '[A] king is not *mere laicus* [a mere layman], as both the Papists and Anabaptists would have him, to which error also the Puritans incline over far.'   Rather a monarch is '*mixtæ personæ*,' both ecclesiastical and civil (1599 : 52 ; 1620 : 237).   James appealed to God and the Bible not because he intended to create a monarch with divine power that can be able to act arbitrarily (as has long been supposed),[26] but because he aimed to make the Catholics and Puritans silent and obedient to the divine power of earthly monarchs, as God in the Bible manifestly ordered.   Thus it is no wonder that James, who avowed the divinity of royal power, did not hesitate to stress the king's duties for a just government and the common weal ; for in his opinion only a monarch is ordained by God to be in full charge of his country and people.[27]

3

Lastly, I will define the position of James's politics in the history of western political thought, through explanation how James himself posited his political theory in the history of political thought.   As has been shown above, one of James's main contentions was that his political theory was the orthodox heir of true Christianity based upon God's express words in the Bible.   Besides, according to James, it is not only to the Bible but also to the tradition of political thought since ancient Greece that his politics succeeded.   This positioning is interesting because it is quite the opposite of other absolutist thinkers such as Bodin, from whom James learned, and Thomas Hobbes of the next generation.   Both Bodin and Hobbes, who avowed absolute sovereignty to suppress civil wars, regarded the ancient tradition of political thought as one of the main sources of rebellion and disorder.   From their perspective, traditional politics was ardent in limiting political power on the pretext of good government, so much so that it ignored the necessity of absolute sovereignty.   One typical example of this was, according to them, the theory of mixed government that set limitations on royal sovereignty.[28]   Confessionalist thinkers such as the Hugenot François Hotman, who fought for true religion, referred to many of the ancient political thinkers such as 'Plato, Aristotle, Polybius and Cicero' or Tacitus to show that a mixed and limited government was the European legacy and to justify the right of resistance to an unjust and

absolute government.[29]   On the contrary, Bodin and Hobbes strongly insisted that the tradition of political thought had been so misguided that it was necessary to build a new science of politics. Thus Hobbes claimed that true political theory had just started with his own absolutist theory.[30]

Although James shared a common concern with Bodin and Hobbes to build absolute sovereignty, he also went a diverged way on this point.   In the same way that he intended to set himself up as the orthodox heir of Christian political thought, James's strategy here was to show that it was not the rebels' but his own political theory that genuinely succeeded to the tradition of European political thought.   In his opinion, it is his theory that is sanctioned by the tradition. Whereas the first book of *Basilikon Doron* discussed 'A King's Christian Duty towards God' and was full of references to the Bible, the second book on a king's duty as a sovereign, and the final book on the good behavior of a king referred to many texts of ancient political thinkers to show that his view was compatible with traditional political theory as well as the Bible.   Among the ancient books which James referred to, Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* [*Education of Cyrus*], Plato's *Republic* and *Laws*, Aristotle's *Politics*, Cicero's *On Duties* and *Letter to Quintus* are among the most frequently referred books.[31]   James used these for his own purpose, especially to describe the distinction between a just king who cares for the people and a bad one who governs according to his passions, and to show examples for a king.   It is certain that these ancient texts are suitable for this purpose.   Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*, for example, which reports the whole life of the ideal king Cyrus of Persia and extracts practical lessons from it, was very useful for James. He recommends his son to read Xenophon 'who had no mind of flattering you or me' and 'set down a fair pattern, for education of a young king, under the supposed name of *Cyrus*' (1599 : 20, 32–3, 45, 47–8, 50, 55–6).[32]   James's method of using classical texts is evident in the way he used Aristotle's *Politics*.   Because James used this classic to show how bad kings behaved and how good kings should behave, the fifth book in which the Greek philosopher discussed corrupt governments and the seventh and eighth books on a just government were the most frequently referred to.[33]   By using classical texts selectively in line with his view, James was able to refer to the texts of many ancient political thinkers as well as to the Bible.   With this support, he was able to criticise his opponents as novel, strange, and unorthodox.

As to James's selective usage of classical texts, three particular features can be indicated. First, as James ignored the discussions of mixture of governments in Plato and Aristotle, he did not read Polybius as an advocate of the theory of mixed government which was discussed in the sixth book of his *Histories*.   It is true that in the age of James there were still no English translations of this sixth book.[34]   However, he did know and refer to the sixth book.   James's interest centered around the discussion of war and the military in the sixth book of *Histories*.   In

short, James must have known about, but completely bypassed the narrative of mixed government in Polybius (1599 : 32–3).[35]   Secondly, James also rejected another root of limited monarchy as an exception unsuitable for most European monarchies.   That was the Tacitus of *Germania*, whose description of the manners and political system of the ancient Germans had come to be regarded as an origin of moderate and limited monarchy, and had been referred to, for example, by Hotman (and afterwards by Montesquieu) to challenge absolute monarchy. According to James, it was too exceptional to constitute the relevant tradition of European political thought.[36]

Thirdly, in rejecting another side of Tacitus, that of the *Annals* and *Histories*, James criticised another version of absolutism founded upon ancient thought.   This third version of absolutism, which was different from that of James on one hand and of Bodin and Hobbes on the other hand, was the neo-Stoicism of Justus Lipsius who, one generation older than James, edited the works of Tacitus.   As the name of Lipsius is nowadays connected with the doctrine of raison d'état, Lipsius, for the purpose of state-building against civil wars, avowed absolute monarchy. He insisted the necessity of a strong military system and moral characters of monarch such as prudence and constancy, for which the humanist Lipsius resorted to ancient Stoic ethics rather than to the doctrine of Christianity.[37]   Indeed, Lipsius's and James's political theory had similar characters : they resorted to ancient thought ; aimed to avoid civil wars ; avowed a mild absolutism for the common weal in accordance with the laws ; depended on Polybius for military strategy ; completely disavowed subjects' right of resistance ; and further more, emphasized the importance of the moral and personal character of monarchs rather than the institutional system of the government.   However, James severely criticised Lipsius.   The reason which James uncovered in the text was Lipsius's conversion to Catholicism.   According to James, Lipsius proposed not 'true constancy,' but 'Stoic insensible stupidity' which was just avowed for the purpose of 'in our days, pressing to win honour, in imitating that ancient sect' but in fact was belied 'by their inconstant behaviour in their own lives.'   In the manuscript of this discussion, James's intention was much clearer, not to adopt 'Stoic insensible *stupidity that proud inconstant* LIPSIUS *persuades in his Constantia*' (1599 : 48, 278).   In addition, it might be supposed that along with Lipsius's conversion, his being central in reviving Tacitus, who had been enthusiastically accepted in England by noblemen who were critical of James's administration, was one of the reasons why James criticised Lipsius so severely.   The *Basilikon Doron* in which James rebutted Lipsius was written for the prince Henry, whose favorites were in fact the center of English Tacitism of this age.[38]   Excluding Tacitus from the tradition of political thought, James recommended instead that the prince read Julius Caesar (1599 : 46).

By his selective use of Biblical and classical texts, James set himself up as the orthodox inheritor of the European intellectual tradition, who goes straight along the royal road. Among researchers on the history of western political thought, the theory of absolute sovereignty has widely been interpreted as a new invention of the early modern era which responded to the civil wars after the Reformation. Although some advocates of the theory of sovereignty admitted the fact of their novelty as they set their politics as new and true against an old and wrong tradition, James did not claim to be a founder of a new political science. One of his main intellectual efforts was to seek to demonstrate that his political theory was the tradition's genuine heir. His absolutism tried to graft the new perspective of the new age upon an ancient trunk.

Notes

1 Rushworth, 1691 : I, 725-35. As the modern concept of authorship cannot be applied to these monarchs, in this paper we have to adopt a looser concept of authorship and regard books and documents which were published in king's name as his own. Indeed the real authors of the *Answer* were not Charles but Viscount Falkland and Sir John Colepeper, although it must be remembered that the document was published in king's name. On the contrary, it is certain that his father James wrote many works by himself, although he also had more help from his literary assistants than the modern concept of authorship might permit. See Willson, 1945 ; Sharpe, 2002 : 17-8.

2 About a century later, David Hume judged the document to be 'the first definition of the constitution' that saw it 'mixed and tempered,' as Hume did not regard the English feudal government as a mixed one. Hume, 1983 : V, 573 ; Inuzuka, 2004. The importance of the *Answer* in the history of English political thought, which introduced different features from medieval constitutionalism into England, was rediscovered in the twentieth century by C.C. Weston. See Weston, 1965 ; Fukuda, 1997, but compare with Christianson, 1987 : 962-3, 967-9.

3 'Monarchy is the true pattern of Divinity' (1598 : 64). James repeatedly pointed out that in the Bible monarchs themselves are called 'Gods' (1598 : 64 ; 1605 : 147 ; 1610 : 181 ; 1616 : 204). In *A Meditation* on Chapter 27 of the Gospel according to St. Matthew, written for the instruction of his son in 1620, James used the coronation of Christ described in the Gospel as a model for Christian monarchs and drew lessons for them.

4 Just before dismissing the chief justice Edward Coke from the Court of King's Bench, James expressly stipulated that no judge should meddle with or dispute the 'prerogative or mystery of state' (1616 : 211-4). James's opinion on the function of parliament not to intervene in 'the highest points of sovereignty' was thoroughly shown in his *Declaration* in 1622 (esp. 1622 : 251-9, 266-7). As to his opinion on parliament, see also 1599 : 21 ; 1605 : 155-8 ; 1607 : 161, 165 ; 1610 : 189-92.

5 According to James, Saul was in fact elected not by the people but by God. The people of God then did not elect a king, but they 'only gave obedience thereto' (1620 : 238). On interpretations of 1 Sam. 8 in early modern Europe, see Sommerville, 1996 : 176-80. Along with the Book of Samuel, James refers to Jeremiah 27 and 29, and Romans 13 (1598 : 71-2 ; 1620 : 241). See Kobayashi, 2002 : 30-1.

6 As to the liberties and privileges enjoyed by subjects, because they were also originally 'derived from the grace and permission' of monarchs, it is not allowable to call them 'their ancient and undoubted right and

inheritance,' which are nothing but 'antimonarchical words.'　However, as was the case with the law, James pronounced that they should be respected and protected (1622 : 261-3).

7　John Locke noticed James's distinction.　See Locke, 1988 : 399-400 (§200), which cites from 1604 : 142-3 and 1610 : 183-4.　In citing, however, Locke altered the phrase 'the king became to be *Lex loquens* [a speaking law], after a sort, binding himself' just into 'The KING binds himself.'

8　A few years after coming to England, James confessed that he knew so little about the 'law or state' of England that he should learn about.　As to the degree of James's knowledge of this law (including the common law), see 1605 : 154 ; 1607 : 171 ; 1610 : 190-1 ; 1616 : 207 ; 1622 : 255.

9　As to James's view on tyrants, see also 1599 : 43, 49-50, 58-9 ; 1605 : 150 ; 1620 : 231. Cf. Christianson : 1991, 292, n.28 ; Hoekstra : 2001, 445, n.75.

10　'There be three principal similitudes that illustrate the state of monarchy.'　Besides being 'God's lieutenant,' James represented a monarch both as a father ('a natural father,' 'parens patrie') and as a head, while the people as children and as a body.　With these metaphors, James intended that a monarch naturally takes care of the people, and on the other hand, the people must respect and submit to the monarch (1598 : 65, 76-8 ; 1599 : 20, 31, 36, 38, 47 ; 1604 : 143-4 ; 1608 : 87 ; 1610 : 181-2, 195).　In addition, an analogy to the relation between a head and a body, was also used in discussing the relationship between the king and parliament (1605 : 155), between the king and the British Island (1604 : 134-7 ; 1607 : 162), and between husband and wife (1599 : 41).

11　At the same time, James's doctrine of the divine right of kings had widely been regarded as unreasonable, even absurd.　See Greenleaf, 1957.

12　In addition to studies mentioned below, works of Conrad Russell, Kevin Sharpe, and Glenn Burgess are included.　These reinterpretations of James's thought were connected with those of his practical policy.　They stressed a fundamental ideological consensus, not divisions, in early Stuart England.　On revisionists' studies, see Lee, 1984 ; Cust and Hugh, 1989 : ch.1 ; Burgess, 1991 ; Sanderson, 1993 ; Sommerville, 1996 ; Sommerville, 1999 : 224-65 ; and Kimura 2003 : 173-6.　A portrayal of James as a 'constitutional monarch,' however, was seen as early as in the 1930s (Wormuth, 1939).

13　Wormald, 1991.　See also Salmon, 1991 : 248-9, but compare with Burns, 1996 : 283-8.

14　Christianson, 1991.　According to him, the ideological context in which James must be situated was not the confrontation between absolutism and constitutionalism, but among different versions of ancient constitutionalism.　In short, Christianson sees that constitutionalism was accepted all the way across the political spectrum (see also Burgess, 1996).　On the other hand, some historians have asserted that belief in the king's divine right was, at the same time along with constitutionalism, almost universally accepted in James's day ; and that divine right was capable of being combined with legal limitation (Burgess, 1992a ; Russell, 1993).

15　See also Sommerville, 1991 : 64 ; Sommerville, 1996 : 171, n.9 ; Sommerville, 2002.

16　As a result, James's politics often tends to approach to a kind of moralism for kings.　Therefore, it is no wonder that his discussion of king's virtues in the second book of *Basilikon Doron* mingled with that of policies (1599 : 42-9).

17　Glenn Burgess objected to applying the concept of absolutism to the theory of king James.　He asserted that 'the divine right of kings and the theory of royal absolutism were not the same thing' ; and that most of English divine-right theorists, including James, did not espouse the latter, but 'constitutional royalism.'　According to him, they just rejected theories of resistance without 'commitment to any particular view of the king's authority to make law, or of the ways in which such an authority should be exercised' (Burgess, 1992a : 841-3, 858 ; see

also Burgess, 1988 : 14–5 ; Burgess, 1996). I disagree. As was shown above, James expressly stated that only he had the right to make laws without anyone's consent (on which Conrad Russell attempted another reading, though with little success. See Russell, 1990 : 151 ; Russell, 1993 : 112, n.30). Burgess seemed to overstress that most of divine-right theorists espoused the king's duty to govern in accordance with the laws (which itself is a right assertion), and then confused the question of whether a king obeys the laws with the question of who has the right to make laws. In fact, Burgess admitted that the essential of absolutism was the avowal of 'the right of an absolute sovereign to give people laws without their consent' (Burgess, 1992a : 842), which means that James must be seen to be an theorist of absolutism. An absolute monarch in this sense may govern in accordance with the laws. As Sommerville indicated, if James was a constitutionalist, then we have to call even Jean Bodin and Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet, who also avowed the king's duty to govern lawfully, constitutionalists as well (Sommerville, 1996 : 172, 180, 185 ; Sommerville, 1999 : 226–34). Therefore, James's theory might be better called a mild absolutism rather than a theory of constitutional or limited monarchy, though this depends on the definition one may give to absolutism and limited monarchy. According to David Hume, who challenged the historiographical tradition of denouncing the Stuart monarchs, 'I have not met with any English writer in that age, who speaks of England as a limited monarchy, but as an absolute one, where the people have many privileges. That is no contradiction' (Hume, 1983 : V, 562). As to various meanings of the term 'absolute' in Stuart England, see Daly, 1978.

18 Some scholars have attributed the reason for James's emphasis on the duty to care for the people to his realism as a practical politician (Kobayashi, 2002 ; Doi, 2006). In their opinions, the two faces of James's theory correspond to the dualism of theory and practice, although it must be remembered that the king's duty to promote public interest was widely avowed among absolutist thinkers of the age (Oakley, 1968 ; Sommerville, 1996). As to recent reassessments of James as a politician, see Patterson, 1997 : 360–2 ; Cramsie, 2002 : 2–4 ; and n.12 above.

19 Wormald, 1991 : 43.

20 On the two-tiered structure of Bodin's politics, consisting of both absolutism and a theory of a just government, see Sasaki, 1971.

21 As was shown in *Basilikon Doron*, James vehemently reacted against the theories of Scottish presbyterians such as his former tutor George Buchanan, and John Knox (1599 : 46). See Burns, 1996 : ch.7. On the other hand, the political doctrine of Catholics, which avowed a right to depose kings, was intensively examined in a work of 1608, in which James justified against Robert Bellarmine his policy of imposing the Oath of Allegiance upon his subjects. According to James, 'that temporal obedience to a temporal magistrate, did nothing repugn to matters of faith or salvation of souls' is 'an infallible maxim in Divinity.' As to the international contexts of the controversy, see Salmon, 1991 : 249–53. It must be remembered that James dared to permit freedom of conscience unless a subject refuses submission to the monarch, and forbade persecutions even of Catholics (1608 : 86–96, 105–6 ; 1610 : 199). He distinguished Catholic subjects into two kinds, harmless obedient ones and extremists who avowed the Pope's civil power to depose kings, the latter of which must be punished (1604 : 138–40 ; 1605 : 152 ; 1608 : 103 ; 1610 : 200–1 ; 1616 : 223–4 ; 1622 : 260). According to Fincham and Lake, James adopted an ecclesiastical policy to incorporate the moderates of both Papists and Puritans within the national Church, which had been successful until the advent of the Thirty Years' War and a projected Spanish match for prince Charles (Fincham and Lake, 1985 ; see also Newton, 1998). This policy reflected James's belief in Christian unity. Patterson depicts James as a sagacious statesman who sought to reconcile religious

differences among Christians and to build an European peace on the basis of fundamental tenets of faith (Patterson, 1997), although MacDonald sees that James's Scottish and European ecclesiastical policy was in fact based on the Anglican model (MacDonald, 2005). See also Ferrell, 1998, which interprets the claim to moderation as an anti-Puritan propagandistic strategy adopted by Jacobean court preachers.

22   Sommerville argues that many of the English political thinkers in the early seventeenth century, including king James, shared the aim of rebutting the Catholic political doctrine, which permitted a right of resistance and of deposing monarchs, maintained by many European Catholic thinkers such as Bellarmine and Francisco Suarez (Sommerville, 1982). James's theory was constructed against continental controversies rather than against insular English disputes with common lawyers (Sommerville, 1991), although it must be pointed out that the political theory of common law in England was in fact much less insular than John Pocock (Pocock, 1957 ; see also Rodgers, 1985) had claimed (Christianson, 1987 : 962 ; Burgess, 1992b ; Doi, 2006). As to James's view on common law, see 1607 : 162-3 ; 1610 : 180-1, 184-7 ; 1616 : 208-11. James had no intention of abolishing it but wished to clarify its system. Here, James referred to a passage 'in the worst commonwealth there are most laws' in Tacitus's *Annals*, III, 27 (1604 : 142 ; 1605 : 155 ; cf. 1599 : 21-2, 45).

23   Patterson, 1997 : 27-8.

24   James, however, sometimes seems to admit the contemporary possibility of revelation in shoring up his cause (1605 : 147-51 ; but compare with 1599 : 6, 19). See Fischlin, 2002. As to political discourses on revelation and prophecy in the early seventeenth century England, see Hoekstra, 2004.

25   However, from the perspective of James, the crucial commonality between discontented Catholics and Puritans was that both would intervene with civil power (1599 : 52 ; 1604 : 138).

26   To stress the king's duty to promote public interest might have been no useful, if his aim had been to avow arbitrary government in which a king can do anything. See Hoekstra, 2001 : 436.

27   On this point, see Sharpe, 1993, which examines James's commentaries on scriptural texts, as well as his letters and poetry.

28   Bodin, 1606 : 183-5, 192-3 ; Hobbes, 1998 : 133 ; Hobbes, 1991 : 149-50, 225-6.

29   Hotman, 1972 : 155, 197, 203, 293.

30   Hobbes, 1992 : vii-xi.

31   Ancient writers referred to by name in James's printed works include Thucydides, Isocrates, Xenophon, Plato, Aristotle, Demosthenes, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Polybius, Cicero, Caesar, Lucretius, Vergil, Horace, Ovid, Senaca, Quintilian, Plutarch, Tacitus, Livy, Pliny, Suetonius, and Lucian. According to Sommerville, James referred to some 200 writers, but to virtually no common lawyers. The king seemed to have had little knowledge of John Selden or John Fortescue (Sommerville, 1991 : 62-3).

32   Some scholars also focused on James's frequent usage of ancient authors. According to Cramsie, texts of the humanist curriculum, especially Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*, supplied the king with a conception of crown finance that encouraged sustained liberality, though which seems to have few textual evidences (Cramsie, 2002 : 13-28 ; see also Fortier, 1998 : 1271). Kobayashi concluded that James referred to the classics to avow a moral theory compatible with absolutism, which was intended to strengthen subjects' duty to obey (Kobayashi, 2002 : 33-4).

33   The fifth book of *Politics* was referred in the notes of 1599 : 20 (twice), 24, 28, 31, 32, 35 (thrice), 37 (twice), 38, 43, 48 (twice), 49, 60 ; and the seventh and eighth books were in 1599 : 22, 40, 42, 56, 57, 58 ; whereas 1599 : 29, 35, 36, 37, 46 referred to other books of it. Among Aristotle's works, James referred to *Politics* the most, although he also referred to others such as *Nicomachean Ethics*, *Economics*, *On the Generation of Animals*,

Poetics (as *Aesthetics*), and *Rhetoric*.

34   The English edition in 1568 had only the first five books.   The translation of 1633 was the first to include the sixth (Fukuda, 1997 : 16).

35   It is difficult to imagine that James did not know the discussion of mixed government in Polybius, given his familiarity with other parts of the sixth book.   Moreover, the Frenchman Isaac Casaubon, one of the most excellent classical scholars of the age and editor of Polybius, was James's advisor after he had accepted James's invitation to come to England in 1610.   Casaubon had been famous for criticising the Roman Church when the latter had attacked Venice.   See Willson, 1945 : 51–3 ; Sommerville, 1991 : 61 ; Patterson, 1997 : ch.4.

36   'Although it be true (according to the affirmation of those that pride themselves to be scourges of Tyrants) that in the first beginning of kings rising among Gentiles, in the time of the first age, divers commonwealths and societies of men chose out one among themselves, who for his virtues and valour, being more eminent than the rest, was chosen out by them, and set up in that room, to maintain the weakest in their right, to throw down oppressors, and to foster and continue the societies among men ; which could not otherwise, but by virtue of that unity be well done : yet these examples are nothing pertinent to us ; because our kingdom and divers other monarchies are not in that case, but had their beginning in a far contrary fashion' (1598 : 72–3).   Compare with Tacitus, 1946 : 274–5 (ch.7) ; Hotman, 1972 : 220–1.

37   Oestreich, 1956.

38   See Tenney, 1941 ; Salmon, 1989 ; Tuck, 1993 : 104–19 ; Kimura, 2003 : 116–22.   According to Bradford, one of the reasons for James's anti-Tacitean view was Tacitus's hostility toward the Roman Principate (Bradford, 1983 : 138–48).   James, who presented himself most often as a Roman emperor, was the first English monarch to portray himself on his coinage as a Roman emperor (Peck, 1991 : 5, 8. See also Ferrell, 1998 : 114–6 as to the contemporary image of James as the new Constantine ; but compare with King, 2002, which stresses the importance of James's identification with King David, rather than the Roman style).   On the king's side Casaubon, in his edition of Polybius, was critical of Tacitus and Tacitism as avowing a doctrine of deceits and evil actions (Salmon, 1989).

References

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Each text by king James VI and I is indicated by the first year of publication (dates are old style, but the year is taken to begin on 1 January).   Citations are given from the edition by J.P. Sommerville, *King James VI and I : Political Writings*, Cambridge, 1994, because the standard edition by C.H. McIlwain has the serious defect of omitting some of James's marginal notes.   In citations, James's words are modernized.   James uses male pronouns to refer to sovereigns ; here I follow this usage.   As to James's verse, see Herman, 2001, which sees it as James's vehicle for domestic and foreign diplomacy ; and Fischlin and Fortier, 2002 : 61–232.   Some of his letters, including one 'To the emperor of Japan' (letter 152), are collected in Akrigg, 1984, while as to whose editorial defects, see Jonathan Goldberg's review in *Renaissance Quarterly*, XXXVIII, 1985.

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1605	Speech to parliament of 9 November 1605.
1607	Speech to parliament of 31 March 1607.
1608	*Triplici Nodo, Triplex Cuneus. Or an Apologie for the Oath of Allegiance.*
1610	Speech to parliament of 21 March 1610.
1616	Speech in Star Chamber of 20 June 1616.
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