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**Patterson, W. B. *King James VI and I and the Reunion of Christendom*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997. 409 pages.**

Reviewed by James Guba.

The sixteenth century, like the fifth, eleventh, and twentieth, was characterized by religious schism. Protestants and Roman Catholics in Western Europe all recognized their manifold separation from each other in belief and practice, while simultaneously defending their own perceived membership in the true church. Ending the grievous disunity which had fueled or exacerbated decades of European wars was a life-long aim of Scotland's and England's monarch James VI and I (1566-1625). W. B. Patterson's vigorous and persuasive work, depicting James as a "shrewd, determined, flexible, and resourceful political leader," makes two significant historical contributions: it carefully and accurately distills a generation of scholarship which has reconsidered every aspect of the Scottish and English reigns of James; and, more importantly, it advances that ongoing and necessary revision by providing the best and most complete examination of the Protestant king's complex views on religion and how these influenced his irenic policies at home and abroad.

Throughout the sixteenth century, reformers had frequently appealed to the previous century's conciliar theories as a means by which to resolve religious divisions. King James' "vision of a reunited Christendom," however, drew upon the ecumenical councils of the fourth and fifth centuries as the basis for his repeated invitations to Calvinists, Lutherans, Roman Catholics, and even Greek Orthodox. Although the king's initial overtures to Pope Clement VIII failed, James never ceased to seek common doctrinal ground with Roman Catholics in Italy, France, and Spain, even as he attempted to bring unity to French, Dutch, and German Protestants. Patterson successfully captures the combination of obstinacy and accommodation of the king who selected from the practices and beliefs of the ancient Church those which seemed essential. Although chapters on the English Oath of Allegiance, the Synod of Dort, and the beginning of the Thirty Years War will probably attract the most general interest, discussions of less familiar episodes, including the Synod of Tonneins and the English sojourn of the multiple convert Marco Antonio De Dominis, also advance the thesis. Most significantly, the conclusion to Patterson's chapter on English relations with the Greek Orthodox Church hints at the reasons for the ultimate failure of the several ecumenical efforts.

The work's impeccable scholarship is based upon manuscripts from eleven European and American archives as well as hundreds of contemporary printed titles. Each of the ten clear and cogent chapters is capable of standing alone, yet contributes to a coherent whole. Although the focus remains for the most part on England's king, Patterson's work is valuable for any study of politics, religion, or diplomacy in the Early Modern period. As a significant contribution to the history of Great Britain, the varieties of Christianity in Western Europe, and the preconditions for the modern ecumenical movement, Patterson's study deserves a wide readership.