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Reading suggestions

2. PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

In one respect James was entirely successful.

The war with Spain had been stalemated for some time, but there had been an ideologically motivated war party in Elizabeth's council which had kept it going.

Now that party was gone, and Spain's financial exhaustion offered the opportunity for a settlement.

At the Treaty of London in August 1604 neither side made any major concessions, but trade was reopened and diplomatic relations were restored.

James, who hankered after the role of European peacemaker, then raised the possibility of a marriage between his eldest son, Henry, aged eight, and the Infanta Anna, daughter of Philip III.

His overtures were coolly received in Spain, and burdened with unacceptable conditions.

At home the reaction was even more hostile, and the project was dropped for the time being.

Ironically, in view of the enthusiasm with which he had been received, domestic harmony proved more elusive than international peace.

Partly in response to the Millenary Petition, and partly to demonstrate the nature of his own position.

January 1604 the king called the Hampton Court conference of Divines.

Because the **Millenary Petition** had been critical of certain aspects of church government, both **John Whitgift, the Archbishop of Canterbury and Richard Bancroft the bishop of London** were opposed to this move, but were overruled.

Puritans and conformists alike attended.

James ALSO attended and adjudicated demonstrated his independence of mind by deciding now for one side, now for the other.

The concessions demanded were mostly points of detail, and a long list of minor reforms was agreed.

Subsequently these were mostly lost in committee, because many bishops were hostile to them, and the king did not insist as he lost interest.

Eventually the most important and durable decision was to undertake a new and official translation of the bible to replace the antiquated Bishop's Bible and the popular (but somewhat subversive) Geneva Bible.

The result was **The King James's Bible.. the Authorised Version** – the perfect version in the English language

The Prayer Book was immediately reissued with only minor modifications, and accepted by all but a handful of the more radical puritans.

More important in many ways were the canons issued by Convocation in September 1604.

The English church had been limping along with an emasculated version of the Roman Canon law since Cranmer's attempt to issue a new code had been blocked by parliament in 1552.

This new code was designed to establish conformity along the lines of Parker's Advertisements of 1566, but whereas Parker had been more or less on his own in his attempts to obtain subscription, Richard Bancroft, the new Archbishop of Canterbury was assured of James's full support.

He began a vigorous campaign of enforcement, and that re-opened the old wounds which the Hampton Court conference had partly healed.

At the same time, angered by the pope's rejection of an Appellant move to administer an oath of temporal loyalty to English Catholics, the king issued a new proclamation ordering the banishment of all priests.

Disillusioned with this new evidence of hostility, a small minority of Catholic zealots began to plot the destruction of king and parliament alike.

In Ireland the Earl of Tyrone had submitted in the same month in which Elizabeth had died, but this was not followed by any political initiative aimed at resolving the problem of Irish hostility.

For the first few years of his reign, James's policy has been described as 'malign neglect', and during that time the Catholic church not only confirmed its grasp through a series of successful missions, but began to acquire an ethnic dimension by appealing particularly to the Gaelic majority.

Protestantism was confirmed as the religion of the English ascendancy, with explosive consequences for the future.

More generally, the peace with Spain was followed by a boom in English trade, as the erstwhile privateers were forced to find more peaceful outlets for their energies. Lord Buckhurst, the Lord Treasurer, took advantage of this situation to introduce the Great Farm of the customs, a scheme to which the mercantile community was traditionally opposed, but which was rendered more acquiescent by prosperity.

Lord Burghley had favoured this move during Elizabeth's lifetime, but had judged it not expedient to upset the merchants in wartime, when so much depended upon their willingness to contribute taxation.

It is quite likely that the moving spirit behind the Great Farm was not actually Buckhurst, but Robert Cecil, now Lord Cecil of Essendon, and high in the King's confidence as Secretary.

James's second parliament was called to meet on the 5th November 1605, and the night before a search of the cellars at Westminster revealed an enormous quantity of gunpowder, enough to have blown the whole palace sky high.

It had been planted by the aforementioned Catholic zealots, and although it has been suggested that the search initiated by Cecil was not fortuitous, and that he knew perfectly well what was intended, his victims had walked straight into the trap.

The king was horrified, and abandoned any thoughts which he might have been harbouring to ameliorate the position of the English Catholics.

The Gunpowder Plot not only spelled a gruesome death for the plotters, it entered into the mythology of English national Protestantism, and confirmed parliament in its opinion that anything savouring of Rome was both subversive of the state, and savouring of the Devil.