



What kind of king was Charles I?

Case study 1: Monarchs before Charles I – Source 3

Part of a speech by James I to Parliament in 1609

(Catalogue ref: SP 14/53/31)

What is this source?

This is an extract from a major speech which James I made to the Parliament of England.

Parliament was made up of the House of Lords and the House of Commons. The Lords were the great nobles, landowners and powerful men of the realm. The Commons were smaller landowners, plus wealthy merchants and traders.

What's the background to this source?

In this speech, James set out his views on how he would run the country.

James became king in 1603. He wanted the Lords and Members of Parliament to know what he expected of them and what they could expect from him.

It's worth knowing that...

James had a poor reputation as a monarch in some ways because his court was rather disorganised and he often drank too much. However, historians now point out that James was good at reaching compromises with his opponents on difficult issues.

One reason for this is that his court was not too stuffy or formal. MPs and nobles found it easy to approach James and tell him about their concerns.

Your turn: What can we learn from this source?

What was James trying to say? Try to identify parts of the speech showing that:

1. James believed in the Divine Right of kings – that kings were appointed by God.
2. James would not accept anyone challenging his authority.
3. James accepted that he had a responsibility to look after his people.
4. James would respect the laws of the land.



Source 3a

And no because any distrust is bound to grow amongst of his
 faith, I will hold it my duty, to lett my people know what
 I hold in this point.

Kinges are godd on earth, this is illustrated by 3 degrees of
 comparison.

- 1 They are compared to god, sayd to be godd on earth, demyng it w^{ch} saie

Source 3b

- 2 They are the great fathers of the family,
- 3 They are heads of the politique body.

They are like godd for godd maketh, unmaketh, he doo they, godd hath
 power of lyffe & death, he gars they, godd is corruptible to mee man, no
 more are they, godd aduanceth, & pulleth downe, he doo they all
 thinges out w^{ch}in the power of godd, he are the gods of the subiect
 in the disposing of the l^{and}: this is true in a king goddally, pud. sed.

Soe Kinges in the beginning some were chosen by the people, some by
 roughest, some otherwise. They were governed as they thought fit,
 but some they have the requested to governe by lawes, it may not
 be found to the use, as the woman said to y^e h^{er}lip aut rege secundum leges
 aut ne rex sit. And therefore whosoever shall p^{ro}vide a l^{aw} to governe
 by his lawes, p^{ro}videth hym to be a tyrant, for he may not but be
 p^{ro}vid being p^{ro}vid at godd's nomination to ob^{ey} the lawes of god.