

## True Law of Free Monarchies

*James I of England (1603-1625) reigned as James VI of Scotland (1567-1625) before assuming the English throne. James was one of the most important defenders of absolutism and divine right.*

We see that in the parliament<sup>1</sup> (which is nothing else but the head court of the king) the laws are but craved by his subjects... yet it lies in the power of no parliament to make any kind of law or statute, without his sceptre<sup>2</sup>... And as ye see it manifest that the king is over-lord of the whole land, so is he master over every person that inhabiteth the same, having power over the life and death of every one of them; for although a just prince will not take the life of any of his subjects without a clear law, yet the same laws whereby he taketh them are made by himself or his predecessors, and so the power flows always from himself . . . Where he sees the law doubtful or cruel, he may interpret or mitigate<sup>3</sup> the same, and therefore laws made publicly in parliament may upon . . . [the kings] authority be suspended upon causes only known to him.

As likewise, although I have said 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 and for good example... So as I have already said, a good king, though he be above the law, will subject and frame his actions thereto, for example's sake to his subjects...

The state of monarchy is the supremest thing upon earth, for kings are not only God's lieutenants upon earth and sit upon God's throne, but even by God himself they are called gods. In the Scriptures kings are called gods, and so their power after a certain relation compared to the Divine power. Kings are also compared to fathers of families; for a king is *truly parens patriae* [parent of the country], the political father of his people. And lastly, kings are compared to the head of the body of man... To dispute what God may do is blasphemy . . . so is it sedition<sup>4</sup> in subjects to dispute what a king may do in the height of his power.

...Do not meddle with the main points of government; that is my craft . . . to meddle with that, were to lessen me. I am now an old king . . . I must not be taught my office. I would not have you meddle with ancient rights of mine as I have received from my fathers...

Answer the following questions on the back of this paper.

1. How does King James justify divine right?
2. Why should a lowly commoner, such as you or I, never interfere or meddle with the king in doing his job?
3. King James does admit there can be good and bad kings. What makes a bad king?

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<sup>1</sup> an elected body that is supposed to work with the king to run a kingdom

<sup>2</sup> authority

<sup>3</sup> change

<sup>4</sup> Treason or illegal