**Excerpt of James VI of Scotland’s (James I of England) treatise, *Trve\* Lawe\* of free Monarchies*, 1598**

<https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/james1-trew2.asp>

THE KINGS THEREAFTER in Scotland were before any estates or ranks of men within the same, before any Parliaments were holden\* or laws made; and by them was the land distributed (which at the first was wholly theirs), states erected and decerned\*, and forms of government devised and established. And it follows of necessity that the Kings were the authors and makers of the laws and not the laws of the Kings. . . . And according to these fundamental laws already alleged, we daily see that in the Parliament (which is nothing else but the head court of the King and his vassals) the laws are but craved by his subjects, and only made by him at their rogation\* and with their advice. For albeit\* the King made daily statutes and ordinances, enjoining such pains thereto as he thinks meet, without any advice of Parliament or Estates, yet it lies in the power of no Parliament to make any kind of law or statute without his sceptre\* be to it for giving it the force of a law. . . . And as ye\* see it manifest that the King is overlord 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; as by daily experience we see good and just princes will from time to time make new laws and statutes, adjoining the penalties to the breakers thereof, which before the law was made had been no crime to the Subject to have committed. Not that 1 deny the old definition of a King and of a law which makes the King to be a speaking law and the law a dumb King; for certainly a King that governs not by his law can neither be countable to God for his administration nor have a happy and established reign. For albeit it be true, that 1 have at length proved, that the King is above the law as both the author and giver of strength thereto, yet a good King will not only delight to rule his subjects by the law, but even will conform himself in his own actions thereunto; always keeping that ground, that the health of the commonwealth be his chief law.

\*Trve: true

\*Lawe: law

\*holden: to hold

\*decerned: discerned 🡪 to decided

\*rogation: request

\*albeit: although

\*sceptre: scepter 🡪 royal/imperial authority

\*ye: you

\*inhabiteth: inhabit

\*commonwealth: well-being of the people