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## Charles I: A Case of Mistaken Identity

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*Past & Present*, Volume 189, Issue 1, 1 November 2005, Pages 41–80,

<https://doi.org/10.1093/pastj/gti027>

**Published:** 01 November 2005

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For my part I do believe he was not the worst, but the most unfortunate of kings.<sup>1</sup>

...

There is no event in the history of the British monarchy more studied than

the downfall of Charles I. It riveted the attention of contemporaries and has fascinated historians ever since. It is one of those defining historical moments that serve as a prism through which the present sees itself. Sometimes the collapse of the Stuart monarchy has been told as the tale of an ineffectual king, a lesson in the consequences of gripping the reins too loosely.<sup>2</sup> At other times, it has been seen as a conspiracy of ambitious men who overwhelmed their sovereign.<sup>3</sup> In the nineteenth century Charles's ouster was viewed as a consequence of the growth of parliamentary democracy and religious liberty.<sup>4</sup> Subsequently, it was likened to a...

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