

# SENTENCE OF CHARLES I

27 January 1649

Whereas the Commons of England assembled in Parliament have by their late act, entitled “An Act of the Commons of England assembled in Parliament for erecting an High Court of Justice for the trying and judging of the said Charles Stuart, King of England,” authorized and constituted us an High Court of Justice for the trying and judging of the said Charles Stuart for the crimes and treasons in the said act mentioned; by virtue whereof the said Charles Stuart has been three several times convented before this High Court.

The first day, being Saturday, 20 January instant, in pursuance of the said act, a charge of high treason and other high crimes was, in the behalf of the people of England, exhibited against him and read openly unto him, wherein it was charged that he, the said Charles Stuart, being admitted King of England, and therein trusted with a limited power to govern by and according to the law of the land and not otherwise; and by his trust, oath, and office being obliged to use the power committed to him for the good and benefit of the people and for the preservation of their rights and liberties;

Yet, nevertheless, out of a wicked design to erect and uphold in himself an unlimited and tyrannical power to rule according to his will, and to overthrow the rights and liberties of the people, and to take away and make void the foundations thereof and of all redress and remedy of mis-government, which by the fundamental constitutions of this kingdom were reserved on the people’s behalf in the right and power of frequent and successive Parliaments or national meetings in council;

He, the said Charles Stuart, for accomplishment of such his designs, and for the protecting of himself and his adherents in his and their wicked practices, to the same end has traitorously and maliciously levied war against the present Parliament and people therein represented, as with the circumstances of time and place is in the said charge more particularly set forth. He has hereby caused and procured many thousands of the free people of this nation to be slain; and by divisions, parties, and insurrections within this land, by invasions from foreign parts endeavored and procured by him, and by many other evil ways and means, he, the said Charles Stuart, has not only maintained and carried on the said war both by sea and land, but also has renewed, or caused to be renewed, the said war against the Parliament and good people of this nation in this present year 1648 in several counties and places in this kingdom in the charge specified; and he has for that purpose given his commission to his son the prince and others, whereby, besides multitudes of other persons, many such as were by the Parliament entrusted for the safety of this nation, being by him or his agents corrupted to the betraying of their trust, and revolting from the Parliament, have had entertainment and commission for the continuing and renewing of the war and hostility against the said Parliament and people.

By the said cruel and unnatural war so levied, continued, and renewed, much innocent blood of the free people of this nation has been spilt, many families undone, the public treasure wasted, trade obstructed and miserably decayed, vast expense and damage to the nation incurred, and many parts of the land spoiled, some of them even to desolation; and he still continues his commission to his said son and other rebels and revolters, both English and foreigners, and to the Earl of Ormond and to the Irish rebels and revolters associated with him, from whom further invasions of this land are threatened by his procurement and on his behalf; and all the said wicked designs, wars, and evil practices of him, the said Charles Stuart, were still carried on for the advancement and upholding of the personal interest of will, power, and pretended prerogative to himself and his family, against the public interest, common right, liberty, justice, and peace of the people of this nation; and he thereby has been and is the occasioner, author, and continuer of the said unnatural, cruel, and bloody wars, and therein guilty of all the treasons, murders, rapines, burnings, spoils, desolations, damage, and mischief to this nation, acted and committed in the said wars, or occasioned thereby. Whereupon the proceedings and judgment of this court were prayed against him, as a tyrant, traitor, and murderer, and public enemy to the commonwealth, as by the said charge more fully appears....

Now, therefore, upon serious and mature deliberation of the premises, and consideration had of the notoriety of the matters of fact charged upon him as aforesaid, this court is in judgment and conscience satisfied that he, the said Charles Stuart, is guilty of levying war against the said Parliament and people and maintaining and continuing the same, for which in the said charge he stands accused; and by the general course of his government, counsels, and practices, before and since this Parliament began (which have been and are notorious and public, and the effects whereof remain abundantly upon record), this court is fully satisfied in their judgments and consciences that he has been and is guilty of the wicked designs and endeavors in the said charge set forth; and that the said war has been levied, maintained, and continued by him as aforesaid, in prosecution and for accomplishment of the said designs;

and that he has been and is the occasioner, author, and continuer of the said unnatural, cruel, and bloody wars, and therein guilty of high treason and of the murders, rapines, burnings, spoils, desolations, damage, and mischief to this nation acted and committed in the said war, and occasioned thereby.

For all which treasons and crimes this court does adjudge that he, the said Charles Stuart, as a tyrant, traitor, murderer, and public enemy to the good people of this nation, shall be put to death by the severing of his head from his body.

Edward P. Cheyney, ed. *Readings in English History Drawn from the Original Sources: Intended to Illustrate a Short History of England* (1908):487–489.