

James i was
described as "the
wisest fool in
christendom" and his
son charles as ...

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This question is looking at trying to understand who and what factors led to the 11 years personal rule by Charles I. The relationship breakdown between Crown and Parliament began in 1603 with James I and ended in 1629 when Parliament was dissolved. To fully understand the causes of the breakdown we need to look what inherited problems James had to face. Elizabeth had created a debt of £400, 000 which was passed onto James, so already he faced severe financial problems. On top of this was the 16th century price rise, which had created an inflation of 400%. This created the 'Canker of want' (James) where income was less than expenditure. Inflation had seriously decreased the value of subsidies granted by parliament from £140, 000 in 1500 to £72, 500 in 1600. James was not happy with 'the greatness of my debt and the smallest of my means'. Fixed rents and poor management of his feudal dues created even more problems for James; he could no longer 'Live of his own' and had to rely on money from parliament. As Russell said 'The Stuarts inherited a financial system that was already at the point of breakdown'. The character and qualities of James did not help the relationship. James was not kingly in appearance. His oversized tongue made speaking difficult and his small size and rapier proof double he wore gave him a cowardly look about him. But worse of all was his Scottish heritage. He was seen as a foreigner from a land despised by Englishmen as England was still technically at war with Spain. James wanted to unify England and Scotland and saw himself as a peacemaker, which was not very well recognised after the reign of the ruthless Queen Elizabeth. James did not take very naturally to the new ways of English parliament, as in Scotland he

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was used to sitting in on parliamentary debates and having control parliament. James also placed himself in a bad position for having Scottish favourites such as Lord Hay, and unwisely excluded his English advisors making him very unpopular. He was not a traveller like his predecessor Elizabeth who spent time progressing around the country, which resulted in him not being liked as much as 'Good Queen Bess'. In 1605 the gunpowder plot panicked him into fear of being assassinated and rapier proof doublet to bed which did not give him a good name. We can not really blame James for his character but we can see already the relationship between James and Parliament was unstable; they did not trust him and believed he was bringing Scotsmen 'on the make'; it was a foolish failure of patronage Charles, like his father, had a stubborn belief in divine right, but unlike his father he tried to put it into practice. He saw Parliaments 'privileges' as granted by the crown, but Parliament believed they were granted by tradition and Magna Carta. This was inevitably going to cause friction between crown and parliament as they faced the challenge of a new century. 'The times were changing' (Reece) and Charles had to 'manage the balance of the constitution'. Charles also took criticism badly and saw it as treachery, he couldn't even cope with constructive criticism. Also he was a poor communicator, yet another part of his character like his father. He found it very hard to speak in Parliament and his speeches were often short and critical 'They are to be or not to be as I see fit'. This added to the lack of communication between crown and Parliament. Charles only had a small circle of favourites such as Buckingham, and Buckingham's failures, such as

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the Spanish Match, reflected badly on the King. Already the characters of both kings were going to cause some friction and inept leadership, and was therefore the fault of the kings. James' extravagance was to cause anger in parliament and financial problems. His spending on clothes grew from £8,000 to £37,000 a year. Through his reckless spending James doubled his debts in three years from the £400,000 he had inherited from Elizabeth to £816,000. James was wasting the taxpayers' money which created friction, he was spending more than he was getting on expensive gifts for favourites, such as £20,000 to pay Hay's gambling debts, which angered parliament as his debt was increasing. They believed that the amount of subsidies James was receiving a year would be enough to get rid of his debt, but in some ways they were also worried that James was getting too much money from his feudal dues, such as tonnage and poundage, and he could become independent of parliament. They told James he should 'live of his own' in times of peace and in 1614 the Addled Parliament refused to grant James the supply of money he genuinely needed. This is evidence for the breakdown between crown and parliament because of money, and the fact that Parliament used subsidies as a means to control and influence the King, but I think James did have some blame for this. His extravagance increased his debt and his poor management of money caused a lack of support for him in Parliament. This and the failure of the Great Contract in 1610 must ultimately rest with parliament, thus to blame James alone would be unbalanced. Charles also had financial problems. The first started when parliament only granted Charles tonnage and poundage for a year. This was

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so Charles had reduced independent sources of income so they could use money as a weapon against Charles. His predecessor James had tonnage and poundage granted for life so Charles felt he had been treated unfairly by Parliament so parliament aggressively began the conflict. Due to the Spanish war Charles was desperate for funds. Parliament meanly only granted £250,000 when £2million was needed. Charles sold crown lands worth £350,000 but was not enough. This was to anger Charles and forced him into finding alternative semi legal methods of raising the much needed amount. He introduced forced loans which were hated by Lord Lieutenants and sheriffs who had to collect them. This led to the 5 knight's case who challenged their legality and the arrest of 40 refusers who wouldn't pay. Charles also revived ancient laws such as the distraint of knighthood and forestry laws. This expenditure alienated Charles from those who his throne rested on and did not give him the support he desperately needed. I think this conflict was partially both crown and parliaments fault as Charles was using illegal methods to collect money but parliament wasn't prepared to pay out for a war that was desperately needed to be won. MP's attack on tonnage and poundage was confrontational and as Claredon said it was ' meanness at a time of plenty' that drove Charles into unwise financial policies. The treaty of London ended hostilities between England and Spain. This was a very wise decision as war was expensive, parliament was glad to see that James had cut some of his spending. This allowed England to trade freely with Spain and become at peace with a very powerful country. This resulted in his friendship with Gondomar becoming stronger. This was unwise as Gondomar

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was not liked amongst the English, and many were still bitter towards Spain. Having a Spanish favourite also upset his English ministers and the clash of religion caused friction. Anger against Gondomar resulted in the Addled parliament. To add to the insult James executed Sir Walter Raleigh which was not a wise decision. This made him very unpopular with the English, but did manage to keep his friendship with Gondomar, which angered parliament as they saw it as Sir Raleigh being sacrificed to maintain a Spanish alliance, to make the conflict worse. The Spanish match involved marrying James son Charles to Spanish Infanta. Charles and Buckingham stupidly travelled to Madrid but failed to see the Infanta and came back humiliated and eager for a war with Spain. This raised public support for the reign of the country and there was public rejoicing at the failure. This was James fault to try and keep the relationship with Gondomar and managed to anger parliament with his foolish actions. This said, James' refusal to be pressured into joining the Thirty Years War to support Frederick, Elector Palatine, was one of his wisest decisions. James was faced with religious divisions. Britain had three religions at the time of James reign, Catholics, Anglicans and Puritans. James believed in 'one worship of God, one kingdom, and one uniformity of law' he saw himself as 'defender of the faith' and believed he was head of the church. This clashed with other beliefs as Catholics saw the Pope as the head of the Church, and Puritans saw the Bible as their sole authority. He angered the Puritans by being lenient towards Catholics with his friendship with Gondomar, but equally James angered Catholics but not being as tolerant as they had hoped, therefore three plots were set up to replace James, the Bye

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plot, the Main plot and the Gunpowder plot. So James had to look for a compromise. He was wise with his choice to appoint Archbishop Abbot which was a compromise choice as he knew Abbot wasn't going to persecute or provoke divisions. This created religious peace, but didn't solve the real issues Episcopacy or royal supremacy. He also blocked the promotion of Laud as he was an Arminian and was hated by Puritans, and he knew this would cause friction. When looking at religion Parliament was barely involved in this and James kept religious issues at bay. But, equally to blame were the Puritans who were equally as stubborn as James, they were seen as 'Brainsick and heady preachers'. He believed in his prerogative right and wouldn't give it up, but neither would Puritans give up their belief in the bible. James had papered over the divisions and wisely avoided persecutions. But his son was very different. Charles had a close association with Arminianism which angered the Puritans who saw Arminianism as a 'halfway house to popery'. Charles was to annoy the Puritan MPs by using Arminians to preach in support of divine right and using Sibthorpe to preach in support of forced loans. Charles' promotion of Arminians, such as Laud to Bishop of London and Montague to Bishop of Chichester was also to cause friction as Puritans believed Charles was 'subverting the religion of the land'. This was at its truest when Charles married Henrietta Maria, a Catholic absolutist. She had her own private chapel at Hampton Court and celebrated mass on Christmas Day. This antagonised Puritan MPs as Charles was making his acceptance of Catholicism public. The final straw came in 1629 when Parliament in the three resolutions stated that anyone supporting

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Arminianism or popery was 'a capital enemy of the kingdom'. This was a direct attack at Henrietta Maria and Charles' position as head of the church and defender of the faith. I think Charles was inept for promoting Arminianism which he knew would create divisions in the country but on the other hand parliament were not willing to accept that times were changing and Arminianism was a growing religion. There was a loss of initiative and James was less able to control his Parliaments. The old Tudor partnership in government was breaking down. Elizabeth was respected because she was English, but James was Scottish. Elizabeth was very careful with money and could be ruthless. James lacked the qualities that had given Elizabeth the respect and therefore he found it difficult to win the affection that the English had shown towards her. He also failed to understand the need to keep control of his Parliaments, Elizabeth had many great ministers of quality like Cecil and Walsingham who managed and dominated parliament. James unwisely fell back on Scottish favourites which angered the English as he was promoting and patronising Scottish Ministers. Parliament became more powerful and ambitious. James lost control because of committees of the whole. Parliament changed the system to make it harder for James to influence MP's; larger committees were now deciding policies, therefore reducing the royal influence. The commons then developed impeachment where ministers who were corrupt could be persecuted by parliament acting as a court. The impeachment of Weston is a clear indication that ministers were now answerable to both King and Parliament. Faster and faster James was losing control. He had appointed weak speakers who were unable to

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stop criticism of the crown and failed to control the MP's debates. Men like Windebanck and Carew were able to dominate opposition in the way Elizabeth's officials had. This was bad news for James as criticism of his rule was becoming more and more frequent and he finally lost control of his relationship with parliament. 'The balance of the constitution' was being upset by a combination of ambitious MP's like Elliot and by inept leaderships from kings. There are many other views of historians for the cause of the 11 years personal rule by Charles. Tawney saw the rise of the gentry as the reason for the Tudor partnership breaking down, therefore the clash of 1629 was a social and economic class conflict that was an inevitable product of the class struggle. Trevor Roper agreed with the views that social change was bringing about a revolution. Trevor Roper's thesis was the decline of the landowning gentry that brought about change and ultimately crisis. Another view was that of J R Gardiner's. He believed the conflict was brought about by a puritan revolution. He saw the Puritanism religion as a religion of commerce therefore the merchants angered by James and Charles' taxations used Parliament to resist the crown's sometimes illegal demands. In conclusion I think the conflict was not helped by the inherited problems of James with a debt of £400,000 and the inevitable rise of inflation. This fault cannot be placed in James, Charles or parliament but in Elizabeth for the debt. I believe that the cause of the conflict was because of both crown and parliament. Firstly, both James and Charles were careless with their expenditure so it was only expected for Parliament to be angered with having to keep granting subsidies. Their characters did not aid the situation, both having

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communication problems and a stubborn belief in Divine Right of the King was a contributing factor which could only be blamed on James and Charles. On the other hand Parliament was mean with their money and did not grant James or Charles the money they genuinely needed. Charles close association with Armianism was bound to anger Puritan MP's who saw the crisis as being caused by the ' extraordinary growth in Armianism' causing a division between the country. James lost control of his parliaments and failed to gain the respect of the English people, unlike his predecessor Elizabeth, whilst Parliament was not willing to compromise with Charles which resulted in the three resolutions. Overall I do not think one party can tale full blame for the 11 years personal rule as it had many different causes not only from the crown, but from Parliament. 2, 562 words