

**Sir Thomas Urquhart of Cromarty, 400th Anniversary Conference, 15th/16th
April 2011, at the Stables, Cromarty.
Lecture on the First Episcopate on Scotland.**

A few weeks ago there was a gardeners' question time at Camphill School on the west side of Aberdeen. The panel included that celebrated "Kilmarnock wabster"¹ Jim McColl, of Beechgrove Garden fame. A lady in the audience went up to the rostrum and dumped a weed, in a plastic bag, on the table, in front of the panel. Her question was "*How do I get rid of this?*" Jim McColl looked at the contents and said, "*Well if you're a Presbyterian you call this Bishop's Weed, but if you're an Episcopalian you call it Ground Elder!*"

That is probably the best way to describe the *real politique* of the Scottish Church in the First Episcopate. In fact one writer called members of the Church of Scotland at this time, Presbyterian Episcopalians!

With the Union of the Crowns in 1603 and the departure of the Court of King James to London the Scottish religious world became more and more aware of English theological and ecclesiastical thought. King James, himself, was keen to assimilate both ecclesiastical establishments.

This year we celebrate the 400th anniversary of the advent of the Authorised Version (KJV) of the Bible, but the story in Scotland was somewhat different. Much to the annoyance of King James the Geneva Bible ruled supreme in Scotland, at least, during his time and up until the Commonwealth period, and that put a different gloss on things. "There was high indignation among the Scots in 1633 at the first printing of KJV in Scotland. This was said to have been done in connection with the coronation of Charles I in June of that year, by Robert Young, said to have become the King's Printer in Scotland in April for that purpose. The outrage arose from the inclusion of 'abominable pictures': not only were they 'Popish' and 'Romish Images', and the Scots Bibles were being sold with crucifixes- Laud had let it be known that they were to be called 'The [Arch]bishop of Canterbury's Bibles.'"²

Currently at Aberdeen University there has been a superb series of Lectures on the King James Bible. Professor David Ferguson in one discourse mentioned that it was the marginal notes in the Geneva Bible that upset James. To James some of it was subversive and contrary to his belief in 'Divine Right'. The Doctrinal and Political Theology of the Geneva Bible had been espoused by John Knox. The Bible had become a 'political' tool in the hands of anyone who could read standard English. Dr Naomi Tadmor of Lancaster University, this week's lecturer, spoke about the KJV translators 'englishing' the Bible, and the use of the word 'prince' for an amalgamation of fourteen Hebrew words. You can see what is going on there! You could ask why wasn't the Bible printed in Scots? Well that's another subject and we're not going there! It was all a far cry from one pre-Reformation Bishop of Dunkeld who was reputed to have said... "*I thanke God, that I never new quhat the Old and New Testament was*".

This was a period when many Scots travelled to the Continent of Europe for trade, for education, as mercenaries or just simply as religious refugees. Every change in ecclesiastical polity in Scotland seemed to result in another wave of religious

¹ Robert Burns, The Ordination The Complete Illustrated Poems, Songs, and Ballads of Robert Burns (Lomond Books, London, 1990). p.119.

² David Daniell, The Bible in English (Yale University Press, New Haven & London, 2003). p.458.

fugitives, and this naturally brought them into contact with academics, theologians and churchmen in England and across the Continent.¹

There can be no doubt of the influence exerted by the French Protestant Church upon Scotland in matters of Church government, worship and doctrine. This began at the Reformation and continued directly and indirectly to an important extent. The political theories which the Huguenots developed under persecution also made an impression. But as the century advanced French influence seems to have decreased, while the influence of Dutch religion and theology correspondingly increased.

Scotland was very much indebted to Dutch theology in the seventeenth century and this influence remained strong until the nineteenth. After the Synod of Dort no minister in Scotland might with safety be anything but a good Calvinist. The synod held in 1618-1619 was a gathering of the Dutch Reformed Church, convened at Dordrecht by the States General to deal with the Arminian Controversy. Arminianism named after Jacobus Arminius whose studies in St Paul's Epistle to the Romans led him to doubt the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination. He was accused of Pelagianism, that good old British heresy, and disloyalty to the Confessions of the Church. The Arminians insisted that the Divine sovereignty was compatible with a real human free will; that Jesus Christ died for all and not only for the elect.² In England the anti-Calvinistic trend in the 17th century, and especially in the Laudian revival, was widely termed Arminian by its opponents, though it is doubtful if here the direct influence of Arminius' teaching was at all considerable.

The Presbyterians were as a rule staunchly Calvinistic, while the Episcopalians by the end of the 17th century for the most part still called themselves Calvinists, but were less concerned about theology and a few allowed Arminian, Platonist and other ideas to intrude themselves. The Synod of Dort was Orthodoxy in Scotland.

The problem in 17th century Scottish religion basically was that the Stuart Kings i.e. James VI and Charles I could not help dabbling in the affairs of the Church of Scotland. One could conjecture that if they had kept their noses out of the Kirk the story might have been different.

In the year 1610, King James, in order to restore the Apostolic Succession, had the titular Archbishop of Glasgow, and Bishops of Brechin and Galloway, consecrated according to the English Ordinal on Sunday 21st of October, by the Bishops of London, Ely, Rochester and Worcester. The three Scots Bishops subsequently consecrated the remaining titular Scots Bishops on their return home.

James having re-established Episcopacy, then proceeded with the next part of the programme in the form of the Five Articles of Perth, which were agreed by the General Assembly at Perth and they were as follows:

- (1) Communion to be received kneeling.
- (2) Private communion for the sick.
- (3) Private Baptism to be allowed.
- (4) Confirmation to be restored.
- (5) Major Festivals of the Christian Year to be observed.

¹ Steve Murdoch. Network North, Scottish Kin, Commercial and Covert Associations in Northern Europe 1603-1746 (Brill, Leiden & Boston, 2006).

² F L Cross, The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church (University Press, Oxford, 1997). p107.

A considerable number of the ministers refused to obey the Perth Articles, and several of those who were most active in resisting were suspended or deprived by the Court of High Commission. The King, finding that every effort was made by the opponents of the articles to stir up the nation against them, resolved to have their authority confirmed by parliament.

The Estates of the Kingdom met at Edinburgh, in July, 1621. The Marquis of Hamilton was the royal commissioner, and succeeded, with some difficulty, in obtaining the desired ratification, seventy-eight voting for it, and fifty-one against. "Though the articles were now sanctioned by the highest civil as well as ecclesiastical authority, the opposition still continued, and the bishops were obliged in many cases to connive at their partial observance, or their entire disuse. The recusant ministers shewed themselves prepared to undergo any suffering in defence of their principles."¹

The measures of King James had all along been opposed by the party of which Andrew Melville, the second generation Reformer was formerly the leader. "James' idea of a Churchman was an obsequious bishop, and his idea of a pest was Andrew Melville!"² However for many years, the nation generally acquiesced without showing much feeling on the one side or the other. This admits of an easy explanation. "There was no attempt to interfere either with doctrine or worship; and in regard to church government the people were indifferent, sometimes even showing a preference for the supremacy of the sovereign to that of ecclesiastical courts. A great change had begun with the enactment of the Perth articles. There was now for the first time an alteration in the forms of worship to which the people had become accustomed. Three of the articles gave little offence. Private Baptism and Private Communion were simply privileges to those who were willing to avail themselves of them, and Confirmation never seems to have been insisted on. But the observance of the five holy-days was enjoined by the privy council, and caused much discontent. Still more offensive was the article which required kneeling at the Communion." To some this reeked of Romanism and "religious persons were offended during the most sacred part of Christian worship."³

Edinburgh continued to be the headquarters of Presbyterianism. Ill feeling in Edinburgh was shared in South Western counties and in Fife. There were no complaints in Perth or Dundee, and St Andrews was coming round. In Aberdeen, the influence of the bishop and the university, aided by old prepossessions, caused the changes not only to be submitted to but to be welcomed. "Even in the West the prevalence of extreme Presbyterian opinions was not universal. At Glasgow, except in the University, there was no marked opposition; while Paisley, at this time is described as 'a nest of Papists'."⁴

In 1622, Andrew Melville, died in exile leaving the Presbyterians without a leader. Their chief men had been removed by death, imprisonment, or banishment.

¹ George Grub, *An Ecclesiastical History of Scotland Volume II* (Edmonston and Douglas, Edinburgh, 1861). p.325.

² G W Henderson, *Religious Life in XVII Century Scotland* (University Press, Cambridge, 1937). p.169.

³ George Grub, *Op Cit*, pp. 325-326.

⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 326-327.

In January, 1623, in terms of an order sent by the king, the regular use of the Morning and Evening Service of the Church of England began in the Chapel of St Mary's College, St Andrews.

A short time before Easter, 1624, a commotion arose at Edinburgh, originating in the Perth Articles, but mixed up with the dissatisfaction excited among the Puritans of that city by the doctrines of one of their ministers, Dr William Forbes (his commemoration was Tuesday past in the Calendar) He was born at Aberdeen in 1585, educated at the Grammar School, and afterwards at the newly opened Marischal College. In his 21st year he went abroad to Poland, studied in several of the Universities of Germany and Holland. He returned to Aberdeen, at the end of five years, via Oxford, having been ordained, became minister at Alford, then Monymusk. In November 1616, he was appointed as one of the ministers of St Nicholas Kirk. In 1617 he became Doctor of Divinity and in 1618 was at the Perth Assembly where he defended the lawfulness of kneeling at Communion. His opinions went far beyond those maintained by most of the bishops and he was in favour of the restoration of various primitive doctrines and practices which hitherto had found few supporters in Scotland. "During the year 1618 a formal dispute broke out between him and Andrew Aitie, Principal of Marischal College, regarding lawfulness of prayers for the dead; and it shows how far the ancient doctrines had already been received in the theological schools of Aberdeen, that Aitie was looked upon with suspicion for maintaining the negative opinion in the controversy."¹ Aitie who wasn't really qualified for the office, was induced to resign and Forbes was appointed his successor.

At end of year 1621 Forbes was chosen as one of the ministers of Edinburgh. It was thought that it was expedient for the good of the Church that divines of approved ecclesiastical principles should be placed in the congregations of the capital, which had so long furnished leaders to the Presbyterian party.

Dr Forbes had strenuously enforced the duty of submission to the Perth Articles, not only as enjoined by authority, but as sanctioned by the practice of the universal Church. He "had taught that episcopacy was not an institution of human appointment, but a divine ordinance, founded on the word of God, the practice of the Apostles, and the authority of the primitive Church. He also claimed that several points of disputes with the Roman Catholics, especially those regarding Justification, were capable of being reconciled with the doctrines of the Reformed Church, the popular feeling became excited. The usage of making periodical inquisition into the character and teaching of the ministers was still kept up at Edinburgh. In March 1624, the town council, magistrates and the citizens, assembled for that purpose. The ministers denied that the people had any right to examine into their doctrine. The citizens maintained that as God's people, they had a right to try the doctrine of their pastors."²

Communion was to be celebrated on Easter Day the 28th of March, on the previous Thursday Dr Forbes censured some of the elders and deacons who had intimated their intention not to be present. However on account of health, Forbes resigned his charge, and returned to Aberdeen.

In March 1625 King James died. "The great improvement which his government effected in the condition of Scotland has seldom been sufficiently acknowledged.... On the other hand much evil had been done for which the king himself was chiefly

¹ George Grub, Op Cit, p. 331.

² Ibid, p.332.

responsible. Having been successful in repressing aristocratical tyranny, he had exceeded his lawful prerogatives, and assumed to himself and his council an authority which he had no right to exercise without the consent of parliament. So also in the government of the Church, in room of the ecclesiastical democracy of the ministers, he had claimed for the crown a sort of metropolitanical authority, by virtue of which all matters of external order, the regulation of rites and ceremonies, and the appointment of offices for divine worship, were subjected to the control of the sovereign.”¹

On the 31st March, Charles was proclaimed King at the cross of Edinburgh. Charles was decidedly against the usage of the people of Edinburgh to try and censure their ministers. He regarded it as “Anabaptistical frenzy.”²

In July 1626, Charles I sent to the prelates certain instructions regarding ecclesiastical affairs, chiefly in reference to the Perth Articles.

Permission was given to such ministers as had scruples about the articles, and had been admitted before the Perth assembly, to forbear observing them, providing they did not openly speak against them, or dissuade others from their observance, or refuse communion to any who wished to partake of it kneeling, or receive any from other congregations without testimonials from their pastors. The banished, imprisoned, and suspended ministers were to be restored on similar conditions, but all who had been admitted subsequently to the synod were to be obliged to observe the articles. James had secured moderate endowments for several of the bishops. Charles restored to the two metropolitan sees a further share of their old endowments, and he was able to procure a better maintenance for the clergy.

During the earlier years of Charles “the practical toleration in regard to the Perth articles was producing good effect. Kneeling at the Communion became more common and the holy days were better observed; and, if the people had not been alarmed by the dread of other innovations, the articles might gradually have been established.”³

On the 15th June 1633, Charles I, arrived in Edinburgh, with Dr. Laud Bishop of London, Dr. White, Bishop of Ely, and a numerous retinue of English and Scottish nobles and gentlemen. Charles was crowned King at Holyrood on the 18th June. “The whole ritual resembled that used in England.”⁴

Parliament met immediately afterwards, various acts were passed, among others, a statute ratifying the powers formerly conferred on the sovereign to regulate the apparel of churchmen. This provision was opposed by a considerable number of the members. Under the powers conferred by the statute, the king, in the month of October following, sent an order to Scotland, by which the archbishops and bishops were enjoined to wear in church a rochet and lawn-sleeves, as they had done at the coronation, and the inferior clergy to preach in their black gowns, but to wear the surplice when reading divine service, christening, burying, or celebrating the Communion.

¹ George Grub, Op Cit. pp.333-334.

² Ibid. p.336.

³ Ibid. p 338.

⁴ Ibid. p.344-345.

On Sunday, the twenty-third of June, when the king attended St Giles, two of his English chaplains read the service in the Book of Common Prayer, and the Bishop of Moray preached in his episcopal habit. On the 8th of October, certain articles were issued by the king regarding the mode of celebrating divine service in the chapel royal. This was done at the request of William Laud, the newly appointed Archbishop of Canterbury. The articles ordered that Choral service was to be said twice a day according to the English Liturgy, until a Scottish office should be prepared. The Communion was to be celebrated the first Sunday of every month; communicants were to receive the sacrament kneeling; and copes were to be used at the celebration.

In September 1633 the Diocese of Edinburgh was founded. St Giles had the partition between the Great and the Little Kirk cast down. Dr William Forbes was nominated Bishop. He was consecrated at the beginning of February 1634 at the Chapel Royal. At the beginning of March he sent a mandate to his clergy to celebrate the Communion on Easter Day and to receive communion on their knees, to give a good example to the people, and to minister communion out of their own hands to every one of the communicants. Soon afterwards seized with a severe illness, for which the skill of his physicians could find no remedy. He prepared himself for his departure by confession of his sins with priestly absolution, and by the reception of the Eucharist. He expired on the twelfth of April, being the Sunday after Easter, and was buried within the Cathedral of St Giles near the altar.

In the more favourable clime of the North East episcopacy had fared much better. Bishop Patrick Forbes of Aberdeen devoted his whole attention to the government of his diocese. He exerted himself to obtain fit persons for the vacant benefices, and to disjoin the parishes which had been united to gratify the avarice of the gentry. He visited congregations unannounced! He held diocesan synods twice per year and before business was taken up, he requested his clergy, if they knew anything wrong in his conduct, to use all freedom with him, to warn him in private of secret errors, and, if they were public, to mention them openly. He re-established the former constitution of the university. He preached every Sunday.

“His original opinions in matters of doctrine remained for the most part unchanged. He was averse to any alterations in ritual, but, when they had once been established by authority, he strenuously enforced submission to them throughout his diocese, and supported their observance by his influence in the Church.”¹

An insight into his spirituality can be observed in the account of his death by his son Dr John Forbes.

In March, 1635, when he saw that his last hour was approaching, he expressed his desire that the “health-giving viaticum of the Holy Eucharist”² should be ministered to him. His son, Dr John Forbes, who received the Communion with him, asked “whether he fully tasted the life-giving sweetness of the bread of life. He answered, that he could say with Simeon, ‘Lord now lettest Thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation’.”³

Bishop Forbes died on the morning of Easter Eve, the 28th of March 1635, two months later, the king granted his royal warrant, authorising and enjoining a new

¹ George Grub, *Op Cit.* p. 354.

² George Grub, *Ibid.* p. 355.

³ George Grub, *Ibid.* p. 355.

Book of Canons for the Government of the Church of Scotland, which were published the following year.

George Grub comments, “a valid episcopate had now been established in Scotland for twenty-five years, and various portions of the English ritual had been introduced, but the ecclesiastical system still retained many traces of the institutions of Knox and Melville. The government of the Church was a mixture of Episcopacy and Presbyterianism.”¹

For a generation this settlement of the church worked. “The kirk made remarkable progress towards meeting its own goals of a reformed, educated and financially secure ministry as well as a disciplined parish and nation. Moreover the settlement was unique, combining elements in a way and on a scale that could be found nowhere else. In a sense the combination of kirk session, presbytery, and bishop was a Scottish discovery.”²

“The only proper liturgical office which had been introduced was the Ordinal, and, as its use was a matter entirely within the power of the bishops, it was no doubt strictly enforced. The daily offices, and the order for the ministration of the Holy Communion, in the Book of Common Prayer, were regularly observed in the chapel royal at Holyrood, and the former at least in St Mary’s College St Andrews. The English Liturgy had also been used for some time by Bishop Maxwell of Fortrose, and probably by some other bishops in their cathedrals, but it does not appear that it had been introduced into any other of the parish churches. The Book of Common Order, or what was called Knox’s Liturgy, was still in general use, though now in less esteem, from the knowledge of its manifold deficiencies on the one side, and the increasing aversion to forms of prayer on the other. The ancient ecclesiastical music was unknown, except in the chapel royal, and the Psalter was only used in the shape of a metrical translation.”³

“The five articles of Perth had been established both by the ecclesiastical and the secular authority, but they were still far from being universally adopted. In certain cases the non-observance of the two articles regarding holy-days and kneeling at the Communion was expressly permitted; in many more it was connived at by the bishops. It does not distinctly appear how far the other articles were in use. Private Baptism was probably not uncommon; but Confirmation was entirely neglected by the bishops themselves, and private Communion seems to have been sought only in cases where it was recommended by individual clergymen, as it is known to have been by Dr William Forbes, and the other divines of Aberdeen.

A change of opinion, in a direction opposed to the Calvinistic views, had already begun regarding various matters of doctrine, but the general belief both of the clergy and the people was still in conformity with the Confession of Faith agreed to at the beginning of the Reformation”.⁴ That formulary continued to be the established rule of faith. The new opinions were condemned by the Puritans under the name of Arminianism. They were known to be favoured by the English primate, and, in

¹ George Grub, *Op Cit*, p.359.

² Walter Roland Foster, *The Church before the Covenants* (Scottish Academic Press, Edinburgh and London, 1975). p.205.

³ George Grub, *Ibid*, pp.360-361.

⁴ *Ibid*, p361.

Scotland, those who carried on an intimate correspondence with him now openly avowed their dislike to the prevailing Calvinism.

The Book of Canons, which had been ratified by the king in May, 1635, was printed at Aberdeen, and published in the beginning of the year 1636.

The book was divided into nineteen chapters. The first chapter, under the title “Of the Church of Scotland,” related chiefly to the king’s supremacy, and contained the following declarations:- “Whosoever shall hereafter affirm that the king’s majesty hath not the same authority in causes ecclesiastical that the godly kings had amongst the Jews, and Christian emperors in the primitive Church, or impeach in any part his royal supremacy in causes ecclesiastical, let him be excommunicated.”¹ The third chapter was “Of residence and preaching” Divine service was to be celebrated according to the Book of Common Prayer in all cases before sermons.

Such were the Scottish Canons of 1636. It had been proposed on several occasions, and especially at the Aberdeen assembly of 1616, to compile a body of canons from the acts of the general assembly, and from other sources; but the new constitutions bore little resemblance to any Scottish ecclesiastical enactments subsequent to the Reformation. They were said to have been drawn up by the Bishops of Galloway, Aberdeen, Ross, and Dunblane. Nothing certain, however, is known as to this. They were revised by Archbishop Laud, and by Dr Juxon, Bishop of London, and were evidently framed on the model of the English Canons of 1604. They were not, as far as appears, discussed at any synod, nor were they promulgated with any sanction whatever except that of the king.

The canons made express reference to the Book of Common Prayer, and the Book of Ordination, neither of which was yet published. It was quite reasonable in itself that a code of Canons should be issued before a Service Book, but it was a proceeding equally absurd and tyrannical to denounce the penalty of excommunication against the infringers of a book, the contents of which were not yet known.

The Doctors of Aberdeen University, the disciples of Bishop Patrick Forbes, were charged to draw up the articles of a uniform Confession- Reconciliation between the Lutherans and the Reformed- John Durie had devoted his life to this task. In February 1637 Doctors sent a paper to the Scottish primate, containing their formal judgement. Drawing a distinction between the absolute consent in everything, and agreement in essential points, they declared that both the Lutherans and the Reformed, rightly understood, agreed in those matters of faith as to which the ancient Church had been of one opinion. The Six Aberdeen Doctors were: John Forbes, Robert Baron, Alexander Scroggie, William Leslie, James Sibbald, and Alexander Ross. They were either ministers in the city or high ranking academics in Kings or Marischal College.

John Forbes of Corse, Scotland’s greatest theologian, was the one who was best known. In 1629 he published his **Irenicum**. It was dedicated to his father, and contained a defence of the lawfulness of the Perth Articles, of Episcopacy, and of prescribed forms of prayer. In a letter to the author in December, 1632, Archbishop Usher spoke of this treatise in the highest terms, esteeming his country happy that in him it had produced a second Irenaeus, whose task it was, like that of the ancient Bishop of Lyons, to appease the strife which had arisen in the church. The attempt of the Doctors to restore concord in the Protestant communions of the Continent was

¹ George Grub, Op Cit, p.363.

their last peaceful labour. On the 18th of October 1636, the king had signed a warrant to the Scottish privy council, containing his instructions regarding the Liturgy.

At the Aberdeen assembly of 1616, it had been agreed that a uniform order of Liturgy or Divine Service should be prepared for the use of the Scottish Church, and certain ministers were appointed to revise the Book of Common Order. James intended to introduce the English Liturgy, or a form near to it as possible; but it is equally evident that many of the members of the assembly merely contemplated a book on the model of that which had been used since the Reformation.

Bishops and others in King James' confidence prepared a Book of Common Prayer. Nothing further was done during the reign of James. He hesitated to disturb the prejudices of his Scottish subjects.

In 1629 Dr Maxwell, then one of the ministers of Edinburgh, waited by Charles I's command on Bishop Laud, and explained to him what was proposed in regard to the Liturgy. Laud wanted Scots to accept English Prayer Book. Scottish Bishops thought differently; that they believed that their countrymen would be better satisfied with a Liturgy framed by their own clergy; but that they had no objection that it should drawn up on an English model.

It was probable that the new Liturgy was drawn up chiefly by Dr Maxwell and Dr Wedderburn, Bishops of Ross and Dunblane. Wedderburn appears to have been mainly instrumental in obtaining the restoration, in the order for the ministration of the Holy Communion, of portions of the office which had been lost in the Church of England since 1549. The whole was entrusted for revisal to Archbishop Laud, Dr Juxon and Dr Wren of Norwich.

On the 18th October 1636- the same day on which warrant was given to the privy council for enjoining the use of the Service Book- the king sent instructions regarding it to the Bishops of Scotland. One of these was, that the in the Calendar they should retain such Catholic saints as were in the English Calendar, adding the Scottish saints, especially those of royal blood.

To prepare the way for the introduction of the new book, the king had enjoined the archbishops and bishops to cause the English Book of Common Prayer to be read in their cathedrals, and to be said daily in their own houses, and in the colleges, according to the practice of the chapel royal; but on their requesting that everything should remain as before till their own book was published, the order was withdrawn. When proclamation was made at the market crosses of the various burghs in terms of the act of council, considerable alarm was caused. As copies of the Liturgy were not yet given out, and strange rumours, as one would expect, were circulated.

On Sunday 23rd of July, Trinity VII, the Prayer Book was launched at St Giles. As soon as Dr Hanna, Dean of Edinburgh, began the new service a tumult arose (Jenny Geddes was reputed to have shouted- "*Dinna cry mass in my lug!*") The Bishops suspended the old Book of Common Order and the new Liturgy. The Liturgy had been imposed without act of General Assembly nor warranted by act of Parliament. It had been a bad public relations exercise.

Charles just did not appreciate the fact that this looked like being an English Book being foisted on the Scots. Presbyterians refused to acknowledge any ecclesiastical supremacy in the sovereign and also the crown was not entitled to exercise its prerogative without the concurrence of the Church. The Presbyterians would naturally be averse to so important an alteration introduced by the authority of the king.

The strenuous efforts made by the sovereign to recover alienated possessions of the church, and the influence acquired by the bishops since the restoration of Episcopal government, had won over many of the ministers who would otherwise have opposed their measures. The clergy should have been left to themselves. But the discontented minority began to grow.

The Aberdeen Doctors and many of the Clergy of that Diocese, also those in theological faculties in the other universities, loved Episcopacy and liturgical forms, they appealed to the practice and authority of the ancient Church in support of their views.

The Bishops were not tyrannical. Some of the Episcopalians were models of humility and devotion, devoted to the mystical in religion, the works of Theresa of Avila, Francis de Sales and Thomas à Kempis being on their bookshelves. Patrick Forbes was “an orthodox Calvinist, a simple minded Christian, he nevertheless supported the Five Articles of Perth and his influence produced the only serious opposition to the National Covenant and the Solemn League and Covenant.”¹

Had Charles declared his willingness not to urge the Liturgy and Canons, till duly sanctioned by law then things might have gone differently.

The worship of the Church of Scotland spiralled into a liturgical and homiletic desert which took almost two hundred years to recover.

It is against this background of the First Episcopate that Sir Thomas Urquhart of Cromarty was reared, nurtured in the faith, educated and lived his life.

Scottish Episcopacy was and is no mere exotic in Scottish life and culture. It should not be confused with Anglicanism. Culloden itself (which we commemorate tomorrow) was a battle essentially between Anglicans and native Scots Episcopalians! Scottish Episcopalianism is a belief system and a spiritual force that was born out of the very soil of this country, and soul of this nation.

The Very Rev'd Dr Alexander E Nimmo,
Dean of Aberdeen & Orkney.
April 2011.

¹ G D Henderson, Op Cit, p32.