



## Charles I, King & Martyr

Is it right that we commemorate on the 30<sup>th</sup> January each year King Charles as a martyr? We use his 1637 Prayer Book but it was, after all, the tinder box which sparked the Great Rebellion in Scotland; the opposition beginning with the signing of the National Covenant, which the Aberdeen Doctors were so against, as their support for Episcopacy formed the backdrop of their opposition to the Presbyterian Covenanters.

**C**harles I (1600-1649) was the second son of King James VI of Scotland, becoming heir apparent to the English, Irish and Scottish thrones on the death of his elder brother, Henry Frederick, Prince of Wales, in 1612. On his first visit to Scotland as King, he was crowned at Holyrood. He created the diocese of Edinburgh in honour of his visit to rank third after the two Archdioceses of St Andrews and Glasgow. (The other dioceses predate the Reformation; apart from Galloway being part of the province of Ross; Orkney was directed by either Hamburg, Trondheim or York).



King Charles I

Charles believed in the divine right of kings and thought he could govern according to his own conscience. This was opposed by the British Government and many quarrels ensued particularly with the levying of taxes without parliamentary consent. His views were thought to be too 'High Church' by the more conservatively minded Scottish population. He supported high church ecclesiastics, and his attempts to force the Church of Scotland to adopt high Anglican practices led to the Bishops' Wars, strengthening the position of the English and Scottish parliaments against his rule and helped precipitate his own downfall.

Charles' deeds were responsible for the raising of the National Covenant in 1638, signed by thousands of Scots, created in retaliation for Charles trying to impose Anglicanism in Scotland with the imposition of an new unaccredited Code of Canons and an unauthorised New Scottish Prayer Book. One is tempted to say 'if only he had consulted with the Scottish ecclesiastical powers, if only' —but he rode roughshod over all the advice which eventually

only found political expression in the establishment of the Scottish Presbyterian church as the Church of Scotland and the purging and eviction of the Episcopalians with their Bishops.

Charles responded to the disobedience of the Scots by force, but failed; he gave in and offered the Scots Presbyterianism both in form of worship and in government, and in so doing, agreed to the abolition of episcopacy. From 1642 Charles fought the armies of the English and Scottish parliaments in the English Civil War. The outcome was the construction of the Solemn League and Covenant in 1643; Scotland and England being united in one Presbyterian Church. Charles, however, would not yield on English episcopacy and declared war. He was defeated at Marston Moor (1644) and at Nasby (1645); and finally after his surrender to General Leslie and the Scottish Army was sent back to London. Charles tried to forge an alliance with Scotland, but by the end of 1648, Oliver Cromwell's New Model Army had consolidated its control over England.

The monarchy was abolished and a republic called the Commonwealth of England was declared. In an underhand agreement with the English in January 1647 the Scots handed him over to be tried by Cromwell's 'kangaroo' court on the charge of being 'Tyrant, Traitor and Murderer', and he was beheaded on 30<sup>th</sup> January 1649. This anarchistic state of affairs existed until the monarchy was restored to Charles' son in 1660. There is no doubt Charles I was a king with a vision of religious amalgamation. Read Dr Ann Shukman sermon given at Edinburgh Cathedral, She asks: 'Is not the church nourished by the blood of the martyrs?'



The funeral of Charles I

*Stuart Donald*

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Dr Ann Shukman's Paper:

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