

## Religious factors' impact in the first and second bishops' war (1639-1642)

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**Abstract:** King Charles I ascended the English throne after the death of his father, King James I. At that time people in most were embracing the Catholic faith as a result of the king's notorious religious politics, which made the people abhor the Protestant faith embraced by King James I. That policy was characterized by the suppression of Catholics, and the prosecution of Protestants who refused comply with the laws imposed by him.

The reign of King Charles I was characterized by relative tolerance with Catholics. Some researchers believe that this policy did not come as a result of his being influenced by his Catholic wife Henrietta Maria, daughter of the French King Henry IV, but rather to achieve personal interests, meaning that the change did not take place for the sake of religious reform, but for the sake of improving economic and political relations with the French. What confirms this is that he burdened the people, especially the middle class, with taxes, which led to the rebellion of the Scots, and the declaration of war against King Charles I in what was known as the First and Second Bishops' War, and as a result led to the victory of the republicans and the end of the monarchy and the execution of the king in 1649.

**Keywords:** King Charles I, The Scottish Revolution, The First Bishops war 1639, The Second Bishops War 1640, Civil wars in England.

### The Scottish Revolution: A reading of religious motivation

The New Scottish Prayer Book, organized by Charles I (1625-1649) [1] and William Laud (1573-1645)[1], began to be read in the churches of Edinburgh, on July 23, 1637, but because its content was not in keeping with the Presbyterian doctrine, due to undermining the relationship of the Scots to God and the Presbyterian doctrine of predestination [2]. Charles faced increasing opposition after the publication of this book, but he continued to issue orders to recite it, and was even angry because of the disobedience of his followers to him, and sees that they are responsible for the disturbances and destabilization in Scotland, they must be punished. Instructing the Scottish bishops to continue reading the Prayer Book was compelling the Scots Presbyterians, who are considered among the biggest supporters. The prayer book of 1637 had been accepted, so they campaigned to collect signatures for what was known as "The National Covenant" [3], on February 28, 1638. It was a national charter that was signed in Edinburgh, and it was published all over the country for others to sign [4].

That charter constituted an anti-Catholic document, it had demanded the defense of the "true religion", as well as the renewal of the old charter that was signed by James I (1566-1625) [5], The late King of England.

Inside Scotland, the situation was in need to reform, and its bishops had to be removed, so a meeting had been held in December 1638, in Glasgow to discuss "Five Articles of Perth" [1]. making the episcopate something illegal, obligating all the bishops and archbishops to be removed, and to suspend the instructions of the new prayer book. Charles I would not allow this kind of rebellion, which was threatening his powers directly. Bishop Archibald Johnston Wariston (1611-1663) [2], by his turn, announced the desire of Scotland to occupy England and depose Charles I. The two parties began preparing for war [3].

### The First Bishops war 1639

Although King Charles I obtained the money needed to wage war from Parliament, he was confronted by the refusal of his soldiers to fight the Scots, because they shared their sentiments, especially after the Scots mentioned that they were not disturbed by King Charles I, but by his bishops in Scotland and from Laud, that they are still loyal to the King But not to his corrupt religious staff. The Scots desperately wanted the support of the English people and understood the war as it waged against the bishops, due to the Scots rejecting the new prayer book and episcopal government. Even the English were unwilling to go to war, and they believed that if the king had won that war, they would be in an even more humiliating situation under his rule [1].

The war began, between the forces of King Charles I and the Scots led by Alexander Leslie (1582-1661) [2], in Aberdeen, the notorious Catholic stronghold in Scotland, in 1639, which disturbed Charles and ended up by occupying lands of northern England by Scots. As a result, The King's position was weakened so that he began to implement the desire of Parliament [3].

The number of the king's forces was twenty-one thousand unmotivated men, while the number of the Scots' forces was twenty-six thousand men, inflamed by religious and patriotic zeal. By June 1639, Charles I was convinced that the Scots had a great military power to defeat him [4].

King Charles I agreed to bring the issue before a free Scottish Parliament and an assembly of the Scottish Church [5]. As a result, the Treaty of Berwick [6] was concluded on June 18, 1639. The treaty stipulated the return of all property belonging to the king, the royal family, and the release of prisoners from the royal family, in return, Charles withdraws his forces from Scotland and returns all Scottish possessions and captured men back to Scotland. Charles said that he would summon Parliament in August, but the real purpose of the King's conclusion of that treaty was to gain more time for a future military campaign against the Scots. But the King had no intention of being bound by the provisions of the Berwick Treaty. The Scottish people were not aware of those intentions, but rather trusted Charles I, the leader of the "covenant movement" Earl Rote's, on 12 August 1639, expressed that there were no intentions to overthrow the bishopric of Ireland and England, and also admitted his loyalty to the king to rid themselves of rumors surrounding them regarding the overthrow of the government [1].

### **The Second Bishops War 1640**

Charles I, made the preparations to wage war against the Scots, by supplying men and money in February 1640. Royal troops led by Earl Strafford (1593-1641) [1] arrived at a city outside Edinburgh called Leith, having fortified it, the troops then headed to reinforce the castle of Edinburgh. This plan had surprised the Scots, who had feared that their city was apt to bomb soon [2]. But the king was in need for more money to meet this war demands which forced him to summon the Parliament even though he had been ruling without it for eleven years. Parliament had met on April 13, 1640, among its members was Oliver Cromwell (1499-1658) [3], This parliament which is known as the "Short Parliament", had faced the task of the war against the Scots [4].

Charles I, felt that the new Parliament was willing to give him money to fight the Scots, but both Parliament and the English people weren't willing to fight the Scots [5]. The Venetian ambassador to England stated: "It seems that the English leaders were discovering more through experience, including the people's reluctance to take up arms against the Scots. Charles could not comprehend the bonds between his subjects, which became a fatal mistake [1].

Charles I was facing a coherent adversary due to the determination of the Scots to adhere to their doctrine and not to recognize the faith of the Catholic King, so the majority of Scots agreed to participate in the National Covenant, which is a statement to live according to the Presbyterian principles, to be the official doctrine for them. Thus Scots had joined the Scottish Parliament and provided them with assistance to obtain some concessions from Charles I. King Charles I tried to get the Scots to believe in his cause for a while, but in the end, he had to surrender to them. First, the Presbyterians were not interested in forcing the king to share power with them and to agree to their vision about the state church [2].

Charles I dissolved the Short Parliament on May 5, 1640 [3], after accusing him of standing with the Scots, for not granting him financial aid, in order not to fight the Presbyterian doctrine [4], and strife broke out in London, as the shepherds attacked the palace of Archbishop Laud, but they did not find it, and they killed a Catholic there who refused to pray Protestantism [5].

In the same vein, the Scottish Parliament has removed bishops and state officials from membership in Parliament. On the religious question, Parliament has ratified the Acts of the Glasgow Assembly and the National Covenant. In addition, previous Acts of Parliament passed in favour of bishops, including the Perth Five Articles, have been repealed, The Scottish Parliament extended its sessions until November 1640 [6].

King Charles I's army marched to the north to fight the Scottish supporters of the Presbyterian doctrine, and the Scots, in turn, advanced towards the northern borders of England and defeated the king's army on August 20, 1640, and seized the northern lands of England, and King Charles I was forced to pay eight hundred and fifty pounds for each day of the war. The king became desperate and bewildered [1]. The Scots began working to obtain the support of the English Protestant people, so they sent official statements to the English people explaining their position. These statements included the changes made by Charles I in their faith and his attempt to suppress their religious freedoms by force and converting to Catholicism [2]. The Scots believed that the only way to defeat Charles came by occupying England and forcing Charles I to respect their religious rights, and they made it clear that Scotland was a haven from religious tyranny, and they sought to rid their doctrine of the evils of Charles I, Then a force of eight thousand infantry moved, prepared to guard the frontiers of the Tweed River [3] and crossed the river into England. The Scots made it clear that their occupation came to protect their faith, not to pillage, and they assured the men in Northumberland, that they would not take a chicken or a pot without paying, that they brought with them their livestock and things to meet their needs, and began to occupy areas one after another [4]. Charles I, at that time lacked men to support his Catholic policy as well as money, so he had to negotiate with the Scots [5].

The king began to collect money by various means to provide his army with the necessary supplies to expel the Scots who occupied northern England, and when he could not, he issued an order to convene Parliament in Westminster on November 3, 1640, after he dissolved the Short Parliament on May 5, 1640, as we mentioned previously [6]. The purpose of summoning Parliament was to provide King Charles I with the money necessary

for the perpetuation of the war, but the Parliament turned against the King again because of his illegal actions, his extremist religious orientations, his imposition of taxes and his fight against his followers [1].

Charles I suggested negotiating with the Scots for the safety of England, but they had refused. At that time there was intermittent but sometimes dangerous religious violence in England that lasted for more than eighteen months [2]. In June 1640, Lambeth Palace had attacked by an angry mob who were enthusiastic to impress the Archbishop of Canterbury Laud [3], they also imprisoned Strafford for treason and aiding the king in breaking the country's laws, as well encouraging the king for forcing his tyrannical religious policy against Protestants and Presbyterians. So on May 12, 1641, Strafford was driven whereas the death sentence was carried out of him [4].

Because of the King's weakness, the House of Commons took over the reins of the ruling power, so that a bill was proposed on January 19, 1641 [5], The bill provided for the formation of a new Parliament every three years at least, if not summoned by the King [6], and that Parliament should not be dissolved or adjourned without the consent of the House of Commons and the House of Lords, When the king heard the news of the project, he remained silent at first, then gathered the two councils in Whitehall, on January 23, 1641, and said: **"I would like Parliament to be one of the best means of maintaining a correct understanding between myself and my followers, and I see this as a sincere desire, but I cannot give power to members whom I do not know."**[7]

The House of Commons saw in those words a new impetus to press the vote of the new bill. At the same time the House continued to make successive reforms. It was proposed to abolish the Star Chamber [8], in the Northern Court, the Ecclesiastical Court, and all the exceptional courts. No one objected to these proposals [1], as well as the abolition of the High Commission, which had unjustly judged opponents of the King and Archbishop Laud, thus Charles I was forced to keep pace with Parliament, to wait for the appropriate opportunity to overthrow it, and that opportunity had come when a disagreement arose between the two houses on issues related to the abolition of the Episcopacy government, and there was a majority of the House of Commons in favour of overthrowing the Episcopal government, And a minority of the House of Lords keeps pace with the king and defends the church, so Charles I took advantage of that opportunity to restore his authority and his old policy and plot against Parliament [2].

It is worth noting here that on December 11, 1640, fifteen thousand citizens from London had signed the "Root and Branch Bill," which calls for the abolition of the Episcopal Church from its roots and all its branches. This list was submitted to Parliament by Oliver Cromwell. But Parliament hesitated to pass it, even though it referred it to a committee in February 1641, and John Milton (1628-1674) [3], is one of the prominent figures who codified this regulation, as Milton submitted to the House of Commons a petition in May 1641, requesting the annulment of Episcopal government, and the restoration of church government to the people. Milton denounced in this petition what some bishops say, "that the Pope is not the enemy of Christ and that salvation can be achieved in the Catholic faith"[1], The House of Commons rejected this petition, but approved the prohibition of the exercise of legislative and judicial functions regarding men of the Church, The House of Lords agreed to Milton's request to abolish the episcopal government, on condition that the bishops retain their seats in the assembly, and this was what the members of the House of Commons wanted because they expected the bishops in the House of Lords to vote for the King, What increased the tension in those events were those pamphlets that came out in defence of or attacking the bishops' government. Bishop Joseph Hall (1574-1656)[2] went to say, that the government of bishops has a divine right, on the basis that the apostles or Christ were the ones who established it. Five Presbyterian commentators responded to him, in a famous publication called "Smectymnws"[3], they had discussed the origins of the episcopate and the Eucharist. Five violent attacks had followed by Milton. During that period seven thousand priests demanded the reformation of bishops' temporary authority, their tyranny in the church and the administration of revenues. And then from the various counties, eighteen signed petitions arrived stating that more than a hundred thousand people were recommending the preservation of ecclesiastical government in Parliament, and the House of Commons rejected this but was admitted after violent debates, Then, a bill was proposed by which bishops would be excluded from the House of Lords, but when the draft reached the House of Lords, the Council rejected it [1]. The bill was thus passed by the House of Commons and rejected by the House of Lords. On the first of September, it was decided that the English churches would take down all indecent images and ban dancing and other games on Lord's Day (Sunday), in addition to ban sacred images and prohibiting traditional beliefs. On November 23, 1641, the House of Commons passed a bill leading to the expulsion of the bishops, which prompted the king to announce in the House of Lords that he had decided to be a martyr in order to preserve the principle and order of the Anglican Church [2].

The opponents of the king considered that he was abusing his powers, so the number of church reformers who demanded a fundamental reformation, rebuilding the English Church, and to stand against Charles I and his Catholic principle, increased, according to the historian Shaw William Arthur: **"It is almost impossible to overestimate the damage that Charles I did to the religious sects, and I see no reason to doubt that most Protestants of all faiths had assimilated into Church and State, to achieve divine discipline, and there was compatibility between the service of the Lord and the Crown, These men found comfort in Saint John's letter to the true believers, and they saw in James I, and even Charles I, that they were trying to make them**

**abdicate their responsibilities to promote the true religion under the shadow of God, But, while they saw James I as slowly moving in the right direction, Charles I was an ignorant king threatening the papacy at home, abroad, and within the Church of which he was the supreme ruler”[3].**

The Long Parliament served as a pulpit for preaching and petitioning campaigns for the restoration of order to what it was before the advent of Laud, not for the sake of maintaining the purity of Elizabeth I (1558 - 1603)[4] , and only James I. But to abolish the entire ecclesiastical system and rebuild a system with purely biblical lines, so that, the attack on bishops was much broader than the attack on the laity, and clergy had pursued where more than twenty people of the clergy were chased, The House of Commons punished priests who performed the ordinances or delivered the sermons imposed by Laud. In June 1641, lay preachers had summoned before the House of Commons and were graciously reprimanded for protecting them from the cruel law [1].

To consolidate his policy, Charles I resorted to Scotland, visited it, and courted its people until he had supporters and aides. As a result, the Members of the House of Commons realized that this visit was intended to induce the Scots to provide him with an army to subdue them, so the members of the House of Commons protested to the King [1] through what was called the "Grand Remonstrance". This protest had passed on the morning of November 23, 1641. After a protracted discussion that lasted for more than seventeen hours, it was approved by a slight difference of ten votes, as one hundred and forty-eight members out of one hundred and fifty-eight approved it (). House of Common had included in the protest all the disadvantages of Charles I, and the council decided to print this protest and distribute it throughout the country and its width to inform all the people about what King Charles I, do, from his great inclination towards Catholics and fighting Protestants [3].

In the same context, during discussions that have been occurred in Parliament to prepare the protest document, Royalists considered that the purpose of the protest was to accuse the King of what he did not commit. From an external point of view, this protest has been regarded as a ploy by which the leaders of the House of Commons wanted to regain their lost popularity, by directing charges against the King. Although the House of Lords stood by the king after presenting the document, King Charles I promised to grant freedoms within the limits of justice and equity, which supported and strengthened his position. But the revolution in Ireland [1], After the execution of Strafford and the killing of large numbers of Puritan Protestants by Irish, Parliament prompted the formation of an army to quell the revolution and decided to be responsible instead of the king Charl I, in choosing the leaders of this army, So that the king does not use the army against Parliament. This revolution was followed by false rumours that had told the Irish were revolting in the name of the king, which led to a revolution in the House of Commons. As a result, the House of Commons abolished the episcopal system [2], appointed priests instead of bishops, and expelled twelve bishops from the House of Lords [3].

On January 3, 1642, King Charles I decided to arrest five leaders from the House of Commons, most notably John Pym (1583-1643) [2], the leader of the opposition, John Hamden (1595-1643) [1], and others, accusing them of collaborating with Scots to attack England, eliminate King Charles I rule and occupy the northern part of England, But King Charles failed to obtain an arrest warrant to detain them, so he decided to arrest them without it, during the parliamentary meeting, and after news of the arrest had leaked by the French ambassador, these leaders fled abroad. And when Charles himself entered the House of Commons to arrest the leaders the five, He did not find them. when he inquired of the other members of Parliament, he found nothing but silence, even from the Speaker of the House of Commons, William Lenthall (1591-1662). That was the first time that the Speaker of the House of Commons declares his allegiance to Parliament and not to the King's will [1]. Thus the Civil War [2] Between the King and Parliament was an inevitable incident [3].

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