

**UNPUBLISHED PAPERS OF
JOHN, SEVENTH LORD
SINCLAIR, COVENANTER
AND ROYALIST**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649324835

Unpublished Papers of John, Seventh Lord Sinclair, Covenanter and Royalist by John Sinclair
& John A. Fairley

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

JOHN SINCLAIR & JOHN A. FAIRLEY

**UNPUBLISHED PAPERS OF
JOHN, SEVENTH LORD
SINCLAIR, COVENANTER
AND ROYALIST**

To
James Cameron Esq
with kind regards

John A. Fairley

26th May 1905.

Of this Reprint only 50 Copies
have been printed for private
circulation.

To the Secretary, ...

UNPUBLISHED PAPERS
OF
JOHN, SEVENTH LORD SINCLAIR
COVENANTER AND ROYALIST

WITH NOTES

BY

JOHN A. FAIRLEY

PETERHEAD
REPRINTED FROM THE 'TRANSACTIONS' OF THE
BUCHAN FIELD CLUB, 1905

UNPUBLISHED PAPERS
OF
JOHN, SEVENTH LORD SINCLAIR,
COVENANTER AND ROYALIST,
WITH NOTES.
BY
JOHN A. FAIRLEY.

In the writing of one of the great histories of a country the historian has to handle such an immense mass of matter and extending over a space of time so vast that he is able only to deal with events that in a lesser or greater degree may be ranked as of outstanding importance. And while these great histories become the storehouses of repute to which the student naturally has recourse when he wishes to stock his mind with knowledge regarding the progress made by the human race, it is to original papers such as I have ventured to bring before you—of second-rate importance though some of them may be—that he must inevitably turn if he is to get down to the bed-rock of things, and to understand aright the feelings and motives that animated the prime movers whose deeds are described and summed up in the chronicles of the epoch to which they belong.

These papers then, fourteen in number, were obtained by me about two years ago from Mr Thomas Thorpe, the well-known bookseller of London and Reading, and so far as I have been able to ascertain none of them have ever been published until now. For the reason already mentioned they are of considerable interest because they throw additional light upon a dark period in our national history, and afford us glimpses of what was transpiring behind the scenes in the earlier movements that were developing in Scotland in the great Civil War which ended so disastrously for the Stuart dynasty. Charles I. succeeded to the Crown

of Great Britain and Ireland on the death of his father James VI. on the 27th of March in the year 1625, and it soon became apparent that the old order of things was not to prevail in the new reign. James had been obstinate on occasions but was infirm of purpose, with the result that matters with him were rarely pressed to the point of actual strife. Charles, on the other hand, had fixed ideas and a steady determination to have his own will in all things with no nice distinctions regarding the means he might employ to realise his schemes. He had only been eight months on the throne when he first came into collision with his Scottish subjects by a royal proclamation made in Edinburgh in the month of November announcing the resumption by the State of the church revenues, which practically meant the whole of the vast ecclesiastical lands which had passed into the hands of the territorial lords since the Reformation—Charles maintaining that what the Crown had given the Crown could take back. It was not till 1633 that the wrangling which naturally followed on the heels of such a step was brought to a close by compromise, established on the basis of a nine years' purchase. In this same year the King visited his "ancient kingdom" and was crowned with great state and much solemnity in the Abbey Church of Holyrood House. But in the midst of all the rejoicing there was a widespread feeling of uneasiness when the attention given to ritualism in the ceremonies that took place was seen. The Bishop of Moray preached in St Giles, in the King's presence, wearing his rochet, "which is ane whyte lyming or lavne drawin on abone his cot, abone the quhilk his blak gown is put on and his armes throw the gown sleives, and abone his gown sleives is also whyte lyming or lavne drawin on, schapin lyke ane sleive. This is the weid of archibishopis and bischopis, and weiris no surpluce, but churchemen of inferior degrie in tyme of service weiris the samen, whiche is abone their claitis, ane syde lyming cloth over body and armes like to ane sack."* This innovation was held by the Presbyterian clergy to be an attempt to introduce into Scotland robes and practices which had been affected by Roman Catholics in the pre-Reformation days, and led to a correspondence which has since been distinguished as the fight about "the whites." Such was the beginning of the long and fruitless endeavour to assimilate the Church of Scotland with that of England. It is possible that the efforts of Charles I. to introduce Episcopacy into Scotland might have

* Spalding's Troubles. Spalding Club edit. Vol. I., p. 39.

succeeded in time had he been content to move slowly and develop his plans gradually. But Providence willed otherwise and Charles could not wait. His ill-advised action in attempting to thrust the Liturgy* upon his northern subjects, plunged the country at once into a condition of ferment, and converted into rebels a people, strong in their ideas of loyalty to their Sovereign, but to whom the love of religious liberty was dearer even than life itself. In the prolonged and fierce struggle which began in 1637, when the old woman, Jenny Geddes† flung her cutty stool at the head of the Dean of Edinburgh as he commenced to read prayers in St Giles' Cathedral from the Service Book so carefully prepared by Archbishop Laud, and which did not end until after Scotland and the sister kingdom had finally freed themselves from the tyrannical rule of the Stuarts, many valuable lives were sacrificed, estates were confiscated or subjected to heavy fines, and national progress for the time being was brought to a standstill. The accomplishment of the great Revolution of 1689, however, was an object lesson to Royalty, and made

* Although rejected by the Scots, this Prayer Book has been called the parent of the Liturgy of the American Church.

† In 1886 a tablet of copper commemorating this incident so well-known to every Scottish boy and girl - was placed in St Giles' Cathedral. The inscription, written by Lord Justice-General Inglis, is as follows :-

CONSTANT ORAL TRADITION AFFIRMS
THAT NEAR THIS SPOT
A BRAVE SCOTCHWOMAN, JENNY GEDDES,
ON THE 23rd OF JULY, 1637,
STRUCK THE FIRST BLOW
IN THE GREAT STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE,
WHICH,
AFTER A CONFLICT OF HALF A CENTURY,
ENDED
IN THE ESTABLISHMENT
OF
CIVIL AND RELIGIOUS LIBERTY.

A memorial tablet to Dean Hannay had previously been fixed on one of the pillars. It bears the following inscription :- "To James Hannay, D.D., Dean of the Cathedral, 1634-39. He was the first and the last who read the service book in this church. This memorial is erected in happier times by his descendant." The *Scotoman* newspaper of 24th April, 1886 remarked--"some thought that the other side ought to be heard also and the 'Jenny Geddes' tablet is probably the outcome of that feeling." For some interesting particulars regarding the Jenny Geddes tradition see Hill Burton's *Hist. of Scot.*, Vol. VI., pp. 150-2.

it clear once and for all that no king could hope to reign over Scotland and England again who was not himself ready to subscribe to the laws of the land.

It was during this unhappy time of storm and stress that the papers before us came to be written by men who were in the thick of the fray, and to whose action the present generation rests so deeply indebted for much of the large measure of political freedom with which our country is endowed to-day, even if the methods they adopted sometimes seem to have been provoked by the spirit of fanaticism rather than by any feeling of patriotism.

In Aberdeenshire strangely enough Episcopacy had taken firmer root than in any other part of Scotland, and the north-eastern county was therefore one of the first to receive the attention of the Presbyterian party, and it soon became in consequence the theatre of stirring events. After the Liturgy tumults had subsided an appeal was made to the King to allow the obnoxious book to be withdrawn, but Charles would not consent to this, and the leaders of the people felt themselves constrained to order their behaviour accordingly. On the last day of February, or the first day of March, in the year 1638, probably on both days,* the National Covenant or Confession of Faith of the Kirk of Scotland† had been signed in Greyfriars Church and Churchyard amidst a scene of the wildest enthusiasm. Although, probably an exaggeration, it has been said that as many as sixty thousand persons were gathered together in Edinburgh on this historic occasion which has been so well described in the following graphic lines :—

Oh ! Arthur Seat gave back the shout of that assembled crowd,
As one bare forth the mighty bond, and many wept aloud ;
They spread it on a tombstone-head (a martyr slept beneath),
And some subscribed it with their blood, and added, "until death."‡

To Archibald Johnston of Warriston belongs the credit of having conceived the idea of renewing the Covenant which operated like a cross of fire in rousing the people and summoning them to action.

* Mr Malcolm Laing and Dr Cook assign the date as the 1st of March, but the Earl of Rothes in his "Relation," and the Minutes of the subsequent Assembly, show that it was on the 28th of February. Davidson's Hist. Sketch 1849.

† The document itself was transcribed for signature by one, James Davie, said to have been a teacher in Edinburgh.

‡ Lays of the Kirk and Covenant, p. 77.

In the same year, on 21st November, the famous Glasgow Assembly met. This was the first General Assembly that had been held for thirty-six years, for although there had been six so-called Assemblies in the interval, these were so overruled by kingly influence that they were now proclaimed illegal and their proceedings nullified.* It passed an Act condemning the Service Book, the Book of Canons,† the Book of Ordination, and the Court of High Commission. Episcopacy was abjured, Presbytery restored, and the bishops were found guilty and excommunicated. It was at this Assembly that the Marquis of Argyle first definitely cast in his lot with the cause of the Covenant, and here he declared openly that he would sign it.

As Charles continued to maintain his attitude of dogged obstinacy, and the other side were as determined that they would not yield, the ground of quarrel between the King and his people rapidly widened. Early in 1639, a number of the castles and strongholds in Scotland were taken and occupied by the Covenanters, and when Charles advanced to the Borders with an army to compel them to surrender to his wishes,

* See Act 5, Paper No. VIII.

† By them the supremacy of the King and divine authority of the bishops in religious matters were affirmed, thus setting aside the entire ecclesiastical constitution of the country, while they prescribed in the liturgy a number of observances in the divine ordinances irreconcilable with the Scriptural accounts of their original institution. For administering Baptism, a fount was to be fixed near the church door, as in ancient times, and the water before being used was to be consecrated by prayer, and afterwards applied on the sign of the cross. For celebrating the Eucharist a table was to be placed at the chancel, covered with a handsome stuffed carpet, and during the sacred ceremony with a white linen cloth; the people were to receive the elements from the priests' hands in a kneeling posture, and what remained of the bread and wine were to be consumed by the poorer sort within the church, as being too sacred to be used on unconsecrated ground. All private meetings of Presbyters, or any other persons, for expounding the Scriptures or debating ecclesiastical subjects, were prohibited. No clergyman was to reveal what was told him in confession, unless the concealment of it endangered his own life. Bishops and presbyters who had no children were to leave their effects for pious uses, and those who had, were at least to bequeath large legacies to the Church. Thanks were then to be returned for departed saints, a number of whom had their names enrolled in the Scottish Kalendar.—*Aikman's Hist. Acct. of Covenanting in Scotd.*, 1851. Although the Scottish Liturgy differed little from the English, yet the Book of Canons, which ratified a Liturgy the people had never seen, was first published, and this enabled the opponents to organize a powerful and successful resistance. The Book of Canons appeared in 1636, and the Liturgy in 1637.—*Davidson's Hist. Sketch*. At the present moment, when so much is heard of "Covenant-breaking," it is well to bear in mind that the Westminster Confession of Faith as now recognised is not to be identified with the Confession of 1638, which was framed to bind the subscribers to the most absolute abjuration of Prelacy.