

### 23. The Scottish National Covenant.

[February 37, 1638. Rushworth, ii. 734. See *Hist. of Engl* viii. 329.]

The confession of faith of the Kirk of Scotland, subscribed at first by the King's Majesty and his household in the year of God 1580; thereafter by persons of all ranks in the year 1581, by ordinance of the lords of the secret council, and acts of the general assembly; subscribed again by all sorts of persons in the year 1590, by a new ordinance of council, at the desire of the general assembly; with a general band for the maintenance of the true religion, and the King's person, and now subscribed in the year 1638, by us noblemen, barons, gentlemen, burgesses, ministers, and commons under subscribing; together with our resolution and promises for the causes after specified, to maintain the said true religion, and the King's Majesty, according to the confession aforesaid, and Acts of Parliament; the tenure whereof here followeth. We all, and every one of us underwritten, do protest, that after long and due examination of our own consciences in matters of true and false religion, we are now thoroughly resolved of the truth, by the word and spirit of God; and therefore we believe with our hearts, confess with our mouths, subscribe with our hands, and constantly affirm before God and the whole world, that this only is the true Christian faith and religion, pleasing God, and bringing salvation to man, which now is by the mercy of God revealed to the world by the preaching of the blessed evangel, and received, believed, and defended by many and sundry notable kirks and realms, but chiefly by the Kirk of Scotland, the King's Majesty, and three estates of this realm, as God's eternal truth and only ground of our salvation; as more particularly is expressed in the confession of our faith, established and publicly confirmed by sundry Acts of Parliament; and now of a long time hath been openly professed by the King's Majesty, and whole body of this realm, both in burgh and land. To the which confession and form of religion we willingly agree in our consciences in all points, as unto God's undoubted truth and verity, grounded only upon His written Word; and therefore we abhor and detest all contrary religion and doctrine, but chiefly all kind of papistry in general and particular heads, even as they are now damned and confuted by the Word of God and Kirk of Scotland. But in special we detest and refuse the usurped authority of that Roman Antichrist upon the Scriptures of God, upon the Kirk, the civil magistrate, and consciences of men; all his tyrannous laws made upon indifferent things against our Christian liberty; his erroneous doctrine against the sufficiency of the written Word, the perfection of the law, the office of Christ and His blessed evangel; his corrupted doctrine concerning original sin, our natural inability and rebellion to God's law, our justification by faith only, our imperfect sanctification and obedience to the law, the nature, number, and use of the holy sacraments; his five bastard sacraments, with all his rites, ceremonies, and false doctrine, added to the ministration of the true sacraments, without the Word of God; his cruel judgments against infants departing without the sacrament; his absolute necessity of baptism; his blasphemous opinion of transubstantiation or real presence of Christ's body in the elements, and receiving of the same by the wicked, or bodies of men; his dispensations, with solemn oaths, perjuries, and degrees of marriage, forbidden in the Word; his cruelty against the innocent divorced; his devilish mass; his blasphemous priesthood; his profane sacrifice for the sins of the dead and the quick; his canonization of men, calling upon angels or saints departed, worshipping of imagery, relics, and

crosses; dedicating of kirks, altars, days, vows to creatures; his purgatory, prayers for the dead, praying or speaking in a strange language; with his processions and blasphemous litany, and multitude of advocates or mediators; his manifold orders, auricular confession; his desperate and uncertain repentance; his general and doubtful faith; his satisfactions of men for their sins; his justification by works, *opus operatum*, works of supererogation, merits, pardons, peregrinations and stations; his holy water, baptizing of bells, conjuring of spirits, crossing, anointing, conjuring, hallowing of God's good creatures, with the superstitious opinion joined therewith; his worldly monarchy and wicked hierarchy; his three solemn vows, with all his shavelings of sundry sorts; his erroneous and bloody decrees made at Trent, with all the subscribers and approvers of that cruel and bloody band conjured against the Kirk of God. And finally, we detest all his vain allegories, rites, signs, and traditions, brought in the Kirk without or against the Word of God, and doctrine of this true reformed Kirk. To which we join ourselves willingly, in doctrine, religion, faith, discipline, and life of the holy sacraments, as lively members of the same, in Christ our head, promising and swearing, by the great name of the Lord our God, that we shall continue in the obedience of the doctrine and discipline of this Kirk, and shall defend the same according to our vocation and power all the days of our lives, under the pains contained in the law, and danger both of body and soul in the day of God's fearful judgment. And seeing that many are stirred up by Satan and that Roman Antichrist, to promise, swear, subscribe, and for a time use the holy sacraments in the Kirk, deceitfully against their own consciences, minding thereby, first under the external cloak of religion, to corrupt and subvert secretly God's true religion within the Kirk; and afterwards, when time may serve, to become open enemies and persecutors of the same, under vain hope of the Pope's dispensation, devised against the Word of God, to his great confusion, and their double condemnation in the day of the Lord Jesus.

We therefore, willing to take away all suspicion of hypocrisy, and of such double dealing with God and His Kirk, protest and call the Searcher of all hearts for witness, that our minds and hearts do fully agree with this our confession, promise, oath, and subscription: so that we are not moved for any worldly respect, but are persuaded only in our consciences, through the knowledge and love of God's true religion printed in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, as we shall answer to Him in the day when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed. And because we perceive that the quietness and stability of our religion and Kirk doth depend upon the safety and good behaviour of the King's Majesty, as upon a comfortable instrument of God's mercy granted to this country for the maintenance of His Kirk, and ministration of justice among us, we protest and promise with our hearts under the same oath, hand-writ, and pains, that we shall defend his person and authority with our goods, bodies, and lives, in the defence of Christ His evangel, liberties of our country, ministration of justice, and punishment of iniquity, against all enemies within this realm or without, as we desire our God to be a strong and merciful defender to us in the day of our death, and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ; to Whom, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be all honour and glory eternally.

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We noblemen, barons, gentlemen, burgesses, ministers, and commons under subscribing, considering divers times before, and especially at this time, the danger of the true reformed religion, of the King's honour, and of the public peace of the kingdom, by the manifold innovations and evils generally contained and particularly mentioned in our late supplications, complaints, and protestations, do hereby profess, and before God, His angels and the world, solemnly declare, that with our whole hearts we agree and resolve all the days of our life constantly to adhere unto and to defend the aforesaid true religion, and forbearing the practice of all novations already introduced in the matters of the worship of God, or approbation of the corruptions of the public government of the Kirk, or civil places and power of kirkmen, till they be tried and allowed in free assemblies and in Parliaments, to labour by all means lawful to recover the purity and liberty of the Gospel as it was established and professed before the aforesaid novations; and because, after due examination, we plainly perceive and undoubtedly believe that the innovations and evils contained in our supplications, complaints, and protestations have no warrant of the Word of God, are contrary to the articles of the aforesaid confessions, to the intention and meaning of the blessed reformers of religion in this land, to the above-written Acts of Parliament, and do sensibly tend to the re-establishing of the popish religion and tyranny, and to the subversion and ruin of the true reformed religion, and of our liberties, laws and estates; we also declare that the aforesaid confessions are to be interpreted, and ought to be understood of the aforesaid novations and evils, no less than if every one of them had been expressed in the aforesaid confessions; and that we are obliged to detest and abhor them, amongst other particular heads of papistry abjured therein; and therefore from the knowledge and conscience of our duty to God, to our King and country, without any worldly respect or inducement so far as human infirmity will suffer, wishing a further measure of the grace of God for this effect, we promise and swear by the great name of the Lord our God. to continue in the profession and obedience of the aforesaid religion; that we shall defend the same, and resist all these contrary errors and corruptions according to our vocation, and to the utmost of that power that God hath put into our hands, all the days of our life. And in like manner, with the same heart we declare before God and men, that we have no intention or desire to attempt anything that may turn to the dishonour of God or the diminution of the King's greatness and authority; but on the contrary we promise and swear that we shall to the utmost of our power, with our means and lives, stand to the defence of our dread Sovereign the King's Majesty, his person and authority, in the defence and preservation of the aforesaid true religion, liberties and laws of the kingdom; as also to the mutual defence and assistance every one of us of another, in the same cause of maintaining the true religion and His Majesty's authority, with our best counsels, our bodies, means and whole power, against all sorts of persons whatsoever; so that whatsoever shall be done to the least of us for that cause shall be taken as done to us all in general, and to every one of us in particular; and that we shall neither directly or indirectly suffer ourselves to be divided or withdrawn by whatsoever suggestion, combination, allurement or terror from this blessed and loyal conjunction; nor shall cast in any let or impediment that may stay or hinder any such resolution as by common consent shall be found to conduce for so good ends; but on the contrary shall by all lawful means labour to further and promote the same; and if any such dangerous and divisive motion be made to us by word or writ, we and every one of us shall either suppress it or (if need be) shall incontinently make the same known, that it may be

timously obviated. Neither do we fear the foul aspersions of rebellion, combination or what else our adversaries from their craft and malice would put upon us, seeing what we do is so well warranted, and ariseth from an unfeigned desire to maintain the true worship of God, the majesty of our King, and the peace of the kingdom, for the common happiness of ourselves and posterity. And because we cannot look for a blessing from God upon our proceedings, except with our profession and subscription, we join such a life and conversation as beseemeth Christians who have renewed their covenant with God; we therefore faithfully promise, for ourselves, our followers, and all other under us, both in public, in our particular families and personal carriage, to endeavour to keep ourselves within the bounds of Christian liberty, and to be good examples to others of all godliness, soberness and righteousness, and of every duty we owe to God and man; and that this our union and conjunction may be observed without violation we call the living God, the searcher of our hearts to witness, who knoweth this to be our sincere desire and unfeigned resolution, as we shall answer to Jesus Christ in the great day, and under the pain of God's everlasting wrath, and of infamy, and of loss of all honour and respect in this world; most humbly beseeching the Lord to strengthen us by His Holy Spirit for this end, and to bless our desires and proceedings with a happy success, that religion and righteousness may flourish in the land, to the glory of God, the honour of our King, and peace and comfort of us all.

In witness whereof we have subscribed with our hands all the premises, &c.