The National Covenant

THE NATIONAL COVENANT: OR, The CONFESSION of FAITH:

Subscribed at first by the King's Majesty and his Houshold in the Year 1580; thereafter by Persons of all Ranks in the Year 1581, by Ordinance of the Lords of 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 Bond for the Maintaining of the true Christian Religion, and the King's Person; and together with a Resolution and Promise for the Causes after-expressed, to maintain the true Religion, and the King's Majesty, according to the foresaid Confession and Acts of Parliament, subscribed by Barrons, Nobles, Gentlemen, Burgesses, Ministers, and Commons, in the Year 1638; Approven by the General Assembly 1638. and 1639; and subscribed again by Persons of all Ranks and Qualities in the Year 1639, by an Ordinance of Council and Act of the General Assembly upon the Supplication of the General Assembly: Ratified by an Act of Parliament 1640.; and subscribed by King Charles II. at Spey, June 23d 1650. and Scoon, January 1st 1651.

I - The Confession of Faith of 1581

WEE All, and every one of Us underwritten; Protest; that, after long and due Examination of our owne Consciences, in matters of true & false Religion, are now throughly resolved of the Trueth, by the Word and Spirit of GOD, and therefore we believe with our hearts, confesse with our mouths, subscribe with our hands, and constantly affirme before God, and the whole World: that this onely is the true Christian Faith and Religion, pleasing God, and bringing Salvation to man, which now is by the mercie of God revealed to the world, by the preaching of the blessed Evangell. And received, believed, and defended, by many and sundry notable Kirkes and Realmes, but chieflie by the Kirk of Scotland, the Kings Majestie, and three estates of this Realme, as Gods eternall Trueth, and onely ground of our Salvation: as more particularlie is expressed in the Confession of our Faith, stablished, and publicklie confirmed by sundry Acts of Parliaments, and now of a long time hath beene openlie professed by the Kings Majestie, and whole body of this Realme, both in Burgh and Land. To the which Confession and forme of Religion, wee willinglie agree in our consciences in all points, as unto Gods undoubted Trueth and Veritie, grounded onely upon his written Word. And therefore, wee abhorre and detest all contrarie Religion, and Doctrine: But chieflie, all kinde of Papisterie, in generall and particular heads, even as they are now damned and confuted by the Word of God,

and Kirk of Scotland: but in speciall wee detest and refuse the usurped authoritie of that Roman Antichrist upon the Scriptures of God, upon the Kirk, the civill Magistrate, and consciences of men. All his tyranous lawes made upon indifferent things against our Christian libertie. His erroneous Doctrine, against the sufficiencie of the written Word, the perfection of the Law, the office of Christ, and his blessed Evangell. His corrupted Doctrine concerning originall sinne, our naturall inabillitie & rebellion to Gods Law, our Iustification by Faith onely, 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 cruell judgement against Infants, departing without the Sacrament: his absolute necessitie of Baptisme: his blasphemous opinion of Transubstantiation, or reall presence of Christs body in the Elements, and receiving of the same by the wicked, or bodies of men. His dispensations with solemne Oathes, Perjuries, and degrees of Marriage forbidden in the Word: his crueltie against the innocent divorced: his divellish Masse: his blasphemous Priesthood: his profane Sacrifice for the sinnes of the dead & the quicke: his Canonization of men, calling upon Angels or Saints departed, worshipping of Imagerie, Relicts, & Crosses, dedicating of Kirks, Altars, Dayes, Vowes to creatures; his Purgatorie, Prayers for the dead, praying, or speaking in a strange language, with his Processions and blasphemous Letanie, and multitude of Advocates or Mediators: his manifold Orders, Auricular Confession: his desperate and uncertaine Repentance; his generall and doubtsome Faith; his satisfactions of men for their sinnes: his Iustification by works, opus operatum, works of Supererogation, Merits, Pardons, Peregrinations, and Stations: his holy Water, baptising of Bells, conjuring of Spirits, crossing, saning, anointing, conjuring, hallowing of Gods good creatures, with the superstitious opinion, joyned therewith: his worldlie Monarchie, and wicked Hierarchie: his three solemne vowes, with all his shavellings of sundrie sorts, his erroneous and bloudie decrees made at Trent, with all the subscribers and approvers of that cruell and bloudie Band, conjured against the Kirk of God: and finallie, wee detest all his vaine Allegories, Rites, Signes, and Traditions, brought in the Kirk, without, or against the Word of God, and Doctrine of this true reformed Kirk; to the which wee joyne our selves willinglie, in Doctrine, Faith, Religion, Discipline, and use 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 wee 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 dayes of our lives, under the paines contained in the Law, and danger both of Body and Soule, in the day of Gods fearefull Iudgement:

And seeing that many are stirred up by Sathan, and that Roman Antichrist, to promise, sweare, subscribe, and for a time use the holy Sacraments in the Kirk, deceitfullie, against their owne consciences, minding thereby, first, under the externall cloake of Religion, to corrupt and subvert secretlie Gods true Religion within the Kirk, and afterward, when time may serve, to become open enemies and persecutors of the same, under vaine hope of the Popes dispensation, devised against the Word of God, to his greater confusion, and their double condemnation in the day

of the LORD IESVS. Wee, therefore, willing to take away all suspition of hypocrisie, and of such double dealing with God and his Kirk, Protest, and call The Searcher of all hearts for witnesse, that Our mindes and hearts, doe fully agree with this our Confession, Promise, Oath and Subscription, so that Wee are not moved for any worldlie respect, but are perswaded onely in our Consciences, through the knowledge and love of Gods true Religion, printed in Our hearts, by the holy Spirit, as Wee shall answeer to him in the day, when the secrets of all hearts shall bee disclosed.

And because wee perceave, that the quietnes and stabilitie of our Religion and Kirk, doth depend upon the safetie and good behaviour of the Kings Majestie, as upon a comfortable instrument of Gods mercie, graunted to this Countrey, for the maintaining of his Kirk, and ministration of Iustice amongst us, Wee protest and promise with our hearts under the same Oath, Hand-writ, and paines, that wee shall defend his Person and Authoritie, with our goods, bodies, and lives, in the defence of Christ his Evangell, Liberties of our Countrie, ministration of Iustice, and punishment of iniquitie, against all enemies within this Realme, or without, as wee desire our God to bee a strong and mercifull Defender to us in the day of our death, and comming of our Lord Jesus Christ: To whom, with the Father, and the holy Spirit, bee all Honour and Glorie Eternallie.

II - The Acts of Parliament

LIKE as many Acts of Parlament not onely in generall doe abrogate, annull, and rescind all Lawes, Statutes, Acts, Constitutions, Canons, civill or municipall, with all other Ordinances and practique penalties whatsoever, made in prejudice of the true Religion and Professours thereof: Or, of the true Kirk discipline, jurisdiction, and freedome thereof: Or, in favours of Idolatrie and Superstition: Or, of the Papisticall Kirk: As, Act. 3. Act. 31. Parl. 1. Act. 23. Parl. 11. Act. 114. Parl. 12. of King Iames the sixt, That Papistrie & Superstition may bee utterly suppressed, according to the intention of the Acts of Parlament reported in the 5. Act. Parl. 20. K. Iames 6. And to that end they ordaine all Papists & Priests to bee punished by manifolde Civill and Ecclesiasticall paines, as adversaries to Gods true Religion, preached and by Law established within this Realme, Act. 24. Parl. 11. K. Iames 6. as common enemies to all Christian governement, Act. 18. Parl. 16. K. James 6. as rebellers and gainstanders of our Souveraigne Lords Authoritie, Act. 47. Parl. 3. K. Iames 6. and as Idolaters, Act. 104. Parl. 7. K. Iames 6. but also in particular (by and attour the Confession of Faith) doe abolish and condemne the Popes Authoritie and Iurisdiction out of this Land, and ordaines the maintainers thereof to be punished, Act. 2. Parl. 1. Act. 51. Parl. 3. Act. 106. Parl. 7. Act. 114. Parl. 12. K. James 6. doe condemne the Popes erroneous doctrine, or any other erroneous doctrine repugnant to any of the Articles of the true & Christian Religion publikely preached, and by Law established in this Realme: And ordaines the spreaders and makers of Bookes or Libelles, or Letters or Writts of that nature to be punished, Act. 46. Parl. 3. Act. 106. Parl. 7. Act. 24. Parl. 11. King Iames 6. doe condemne all Baptisme conforme to the Popes Kirke and the Idolatrie of the Masse, and ordaines all sayers, wilfull hearers, and concealers

of the Masse, the maintainers and resetters of the Priests, Iesuites, traffiquing Papists, to bee punished without any exception or restriction, Act. 5. Parl. 1. Act. 120. Parl. 12. Act. 164. Parl. 13. Act. 193. Parl. 14. Act. 1. Parl. 19. Act. 5. Parl. 20. K. Iames 6. doe condemne all erroneous bookes and writtes conteining erroneous doctrine against the Religion presentlie professed, or conteining superstitious Rites and Ceremonies Papisticall, whereby the people are greatly abused, and ordaines the homebringers of them to be punished, Act. 25. Parl. 11. K. Iames 6. doe condemne the monuments and dregs of bygane Idolatrie, as, goeing to Crosses, observing the Feastivall dayes of Saincts, and such other superstitious and Papisticall Rites, to the dishonour of God, contempt of true Religion & fostering of great errour among the people, and ordaines the users of them to bee punished for the second fault as Idolaters, Act. 104. Parl 7. K. Iames 6.

Like as many acts of Parliament are conceaved for maintenance of Gods true and Christian Religion, and the puritie thereof in Doctrine and Sacraments of the true Church of God, the libertie and freedome thereof, in her Nationall, Synodall Assemblies, Presbyteries, Sessions, Pollicie, Discipline and Jurisdiction thereof, as that puritie of Religion and libertie of the Church was used, professed, exercised, preached, and confessed according to the reformation of Religion in this Realme. As for instance, the 99. Act. Parl. 7. Act. 23. Parl. 11. Act. 114. P. 12. Act. 160. Parl. 13. of K. Iames 6. Ratified by the 4 Act. of K. Charles. So that the 6. Act. Parl. 1. and 68. Act. Parl. 6. of K. Iames 6. in the yeare of God 1579. declares the Ministers of the blessed Evangell, whom God of his mercie had raised up, or hereafter should raise, agreeing with them that than liued in Doctrine, and administration of the Sacraments, and the people that professed Christ, as he was than offered in the Evangell, and doth communicate with the holy Sacraments (as in the reformed Kirkes of this Realme they were presentlie administrate) according to the Confession of Faith, to bee the true and holy Kirk of Christ Iesus within this Realme, and decernes and declares all and sundrie, who either gainesayes the Word of the Evangell, received and approved as the heads of the Confession of Faith, professed in Parlament, in the yeare of God 1560. specified also in the first Parlament of K. Iames 6. and ratified in this present Parlament, more particularlie doe specifie, or that refuses the administration of the holy Sacraments, as they were then ministrated, to bee no members of the said Kirk within this Realme and true Religion, presentlie professed, so long as they keep themselues so devyded from the societie of Christs body: And the subsequent, Act. 69. Parl. 6. of K. Iames 6. declares, That there is no other face of Kirk, nor other face of Religion, then was presentlie at that time, by the favour of God, established within this Realm, which therefore is ever styled Gods true Religion, Christs true Religion, the true & Christian Religion, & a perfect Religion. Which, by manifold acts of Parlament, all within this Realme, are bound to professe to subscribe the articles thereof, the Confession of Faith, to recant all doctrine and errours, repugnant to any of the said Articles, Act. 4. and 9. Parl. 1. Act. 45. 46. 47. Parl. 3. Act. 71. Parl. 6. Act. 106. Parl. 7. Act. 24. Parl. 11. Act. 123. Parl. 12. Act. 194. & 197. Parl. 14. of K. Iames 6. And all Magistrates, Shirefs, &c. On the one parte are ordained to search, apprehend, and punish all contraviners, for instance, Act. 5. Parl. 1. Act. 104. Parl. 7. Act. 25. Parl. 11. K. Iames 6. And that notwithstanding of the Kings Majesties

licences on the contrarie, which are discharged and declared to bee of no force, in so farre as they tend in any wayes, to the prejudice and hinder of the execution of the Acts of Parlament against Papists and adversaries of true Religion, Act. 106. Parl. 7. K. Iames 6. On the other part in the 47. Act. P. 3. K. Iames 6. It is declared and ordained, seeing the cause of Gods true Religion, and his highnes Authority are so joyned, as the hurt of the one is common to both: & that none shall be reputed as loyall & faithful subjects to our Soveraigne Lord, or his Autority, but be punishable as rebellers & gainestanders of the same, who shall not giue their Confession, and make their profession of the said true Religion, & that they who after defection shall giue the Confession of their Faith of new, they shall promise to continue therein in time comming, to maintaine our Souveraigne Lords Authority, and at the uttermost of their power to fortifie, assist, and maintaine the true Preachers and Professors of Christs Religion, against whatsoever enemies and gainestanders of the same: and namelie, against all such of whatsoever nation, estate, or degree they bee of: that haue joyned, and bound themselves, or haue assisted, or assists to set forward, and execute the cruell decrees of Trent, contrary to the Preachers and true Professors of the Word of God, which is repeated word by word in the Articles of Pacification at Perth the 23 of Februar. 1572. approved by Parlament the last of Aprill 1573. Ratified in Parlament 1578 and related, Act. 123. Parl. 12. of K. Iames 6. with this addition, that they are bound to resist all treasonable uproares and hostilities raised against the true Religion, the Kings Majestie, and the true Professors.

Like as all liedges are bound to maintaine the K. Majesties Royall Person, and Authority, the Authoritie of Parlaments, without the which neither any lawes or lawfull judicatories can be established, Act. 130. Act. 131. Parl. 8. K. Iames 6. & the subjects liberties, who ought onely to liue & be governed by the Kings lawes, the common lawes of this Realme allanerlie, Act. 48. Parl. 3. K. Iames the first. Act. 79. Parl. 6. K. Iames the 4. repeated in the Act. 131. Parl. 8. K. Iames 6. Which, if they bee innovated or prejudged, the commission anent the union of the two Kingdoms of Scotland & England, which is the sole Act. of the 17. Parl. of K. Iames 6. declares, such confusion would ensue, as this Realme could bee no more a free Monarchie, because by the fundamentall lawes, ancient priviledges, offices and liberties of this Kingdome, not onely the Princelie Authority of his Majesties Royall discent hath been these many ages maintained, but also the peoples securitie of their Lands, livings, rights, offices, liberties, and dignities preserved, and therefore for the preservation of the said true Religion, Lawes, and Liberties of this Kingdome, it is statute by the 8. Act. Parl. 1. repeated in the 99 Act. Parl. 7. Ratified in the 23 Act. Parl. 11. and 114. Act. of K. Iames 6. and 4. Act. of K. Charles. That all Kings and Princes at their Coronation and reception of their Princely Authoritie, shall make their faithful promise by their solemne oath in the presence of the Eternall God, that, enduring the whole time of their liues, they shall serve the same Eternall God, to the uttermost of their power, according as he hath required in his most holy Word, contained in the old and new Testaments. And according to the same Word, shall maintaine the true Religion of Christ Iesus, the preaching of his holy Word, the due & right ministration of the Sacraments now receaved and preached within this Realme (according to the Confession of Faith immediatelie preceeding) and shall abolish and gainstand all false Religion contrarie to the same, & shall rule the people,

committed to their charge, according to the will and command of God, revealed in his foresaid Word, and according to the lowable lawes and constitutions received in this Realme, no wayes repugnant to the said will of the Eternall God, and shall procure, to the uttermost of their power, to the Kirk of God, & whole Christian people true and perfit peace in all time comming; and that they shall bee carefull to roote out of their empire all Heretikes, and enemies to the true Worship of God, who shall bee convicted by the true Kirk of God, of the foresaid crimes, which was also observed by his Majestie, at his Coronation in Edenburgh, 1633. as may be seene in the order of the Coronation. In obedience to the Commandement of GOD, conforme to the practise of the godlie in former times, and according to the laudable example of our Worthy and Religious Progenitors, and of many yet living amongst us, which was warranted also by act of Counsell, commanding a generall band to bee made and subscribed by his Majesties subjects of all ranks, for two causes: one was, for defending the true Religion, as it was then reformed, and is expressed in the Confession of Faith, aboue writtin, and a former large Confession established by sundrie acts of lawfull generall Assemblies, and of Parlament, unto which it hath relation sett downe in publike Cathechismes, & which hath been for many yeares with a blessing from Heaven, preached, and professed in this Kirk and Kingdome, as Gods undoubted trueth, grounded onely upon his writtin Word. The other cause was, for maintaining the Kings Majestie his Person and Estate: the true Worship of God, and the Kings authoritie beeing so straitlie joyned, as that they had the same friends and common enemies, and did stand and fall togither. And finallie, beeing convinced in our mindes, and confessing with our mouthes, that the present & succeeding generations in this Land, are bound to keep the foresaid nationall Oath and subscription inviolable.

III - The Covenant of 1638

Wee Noblemen, Barrons, 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 Kings honour, and of the publicke peace of the Kingdom: By the manifold innovations and evills, generallie conteined, & particularlie mentioned in our late supplications, complaints, and protestations: Doe heereby professe, and before God, his Angels, and the World solemnelie declare: That, with our whole hearts wee agree and resolve all the dayes of our life constantlie to adhere unto, and to defend the foresaid true Religion, and (forbearing the practise of all novations, alreadie introduced in the matters of the worship of GOD, or approbation of the corruptions of the publike Governement of the Kirk or civill places and power of Kirkmen, till they be tryed and alowed in free Assemblies, and in Parlaments) to labour by all meanes lawfull to recover the puritie and libertie of the Gospell, as it was established and professed before the foresaid novations: and because after due examination, wee plainelie perceave, and undoubtedlie believe, that the Innovations & evils conteined in our Supplications, Complaints, and Protestations, have no warrant of the Word of God, are contrarie to the Articles of the foresaid Confessions to the intention and meaning of the blessed reformers of

Religion in this Land, to the above written Acts of Parlament, and doe sensiblie tend to the re-establishing of the Popish Religion and tyrannie, and to the subversion and ruine of the true Reformed Religion, and of our Liberties, Lawes and Estates. Wee also declare, that the foresaid Confessions are to be interpreted, & ought to be understood of the foresaid novations and evils, no lesse than if every one of them had beene expressed in the foresaid confessions, and that wee are obliged to detest and abhorre them amongst other particular heads of Papistrie abjured therein. And therefore from the knowledge and conscience of our dutie to God, to our King and Countrey, without any worldly respect or inducement, so farre as humane infirmitie will suffer, wishing a further measure of the grace of God for this effect. Wee promise, and sweare by the Great Name of the Lord our GOD, to continue in the Profession and Obedience of the foresaid Religion: That we shall defend the same, and resist all these contrarie errours and corruptions, according to our vocation, and to the uttermost of that power that God hath put in our hands, all the dayes of our life:

And in like manner with the same heart, wee declare before God and Men, That wee have no intention nor desire to attempt any thing that may turne to the dishonour of God, or to the diminution of the Kings Greatnesse and Authoritie: But on the contrarie, we promise and sweare, that wee shall, to the uttermost of our power, with our meanes and lives, stand to the defence of our dread Souveraine, the Kings Majestie, his Person and Authoritie, in the defence and preservation of the foresayd true Religion, Liberties and Lawes of the Kingdome: As also, to the mutuall defence and assistance, every one of us of another in the same cause of maintaining the true Religion, and his Majesties Authoritie, with our best counsell, our bodies, meanes, and whole power against all sorts of persons whatsoever. So that, whatsoever shall bee done to the least of us for that cause, shall be taken as done to us all in generall, and to every one of us in particular. And that wee shall neither directlie nor indirectlie suffer our selves to bee devided or withdrawen by whatsoever suggestion, combination, allurement, or terrour from this blessed and loyall Conjunction, nor shall cast in, any let or impediment that may staye or hinder any such resolution as by common consent shall be found to conduce for so good ends. But on the contrarie, shall by all lawfull meanes labour to further and promove 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 suppresse it, or if need bee shall incontinent make the same knowne, that it may be timeously obviated; neither doe wee feare the foule aspersions of rebellion, combination, or what else our adversaries from their craft and malice would put upon us, seeing what wee doe is so well warranted, and ariseth from an unfained desire to maintaine the true worship of God, the Majestie of our King, and the peace of the Kingdome, for the common happinesse of our selves, and the posteritie. And because wee cannot looke for a blessing from God upon our proceedings, except with our Profession and Subscription wee joyne such a life and conversation, as beseemeth Christians, who haue renewed their Covenant with God. Wee, therefore, faithfullie promise, for our selves, our followers, and all others under us, both in publike, in our particular families and personall carriage, to endevour to keepe our selves within the bounds of Christian libertie, and to be good examples to

others of all Godlinesse, Sobernesse, and Righteousnesse, and of every deutie wee owe to God and Man,

And that this our Union and Conjunction may bee observed without violation, Wee call the living God, the Searcher of our Hearts, to witnes, who knoweth this to bee our sincere Desire, and unfained Resolution, as wee shall answere to IESVS CHRIST, in the great day, & under the paine of Gods everlasting wrath, and of infamie, and of losse of all honour & respect in this World. Most humblie beseeching the LORD, to strengthen us by his holy Spirit for this end: & to blesse our desires & proceedings with a happie successe, that Religion & Righteousnes may flourish in the Land, to the glory of God, the honour of our King, & peace & comfort of us all. In witnes whereof we haue subscribed with our hands all the premisses, &c.

IV - The Declaration of 1639

The article of this Covenant, which was at the first subscription referred to the determination of the General Assembly being determined. And thereby the Five Articles of Perth, The government of the Kirk by Bishops, The civil places and power of Kirkmen upon the reasons and grounds contained in the Acts of the General Assembly declared to be unlawfull within this Kirk, We subscribe according to the determination foresaid.

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