

The 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, saning, 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.

Like as many Acts of Parliament not only in general do abrogate, annul, and rescind all laws, statutes, acts, constitutions, canons civil or municipal, with all other ordinances and practick penalties whatsoever, made in prejudice of the true religion, and professors thereof, or of the true Kirk discipline, jurisdiction, and freedom thereof; or in favours of idolatry and superstition; or of the papistical kirk (as Act 3. Act 31. Parl. I. Act 23. Parl. 11. Act 114. Parl. 12, of K. James VI), that papistry and superstition may be utterly suppressed, according to the intention of the Acts of Parliament reported in Act 5. Parl. 20. K. James VI. And to that end they ordained all papists and priests to be punished by manifold civil and ecclesiastical pains, as adversaries to God's true religion preached, and by law established within this realm (Act. 24. Parl. 11. K. James VI) as common enemies to all Christian government (Act 18. Parl. 16. K. James VI), as rebellers and gainstanders of our Sovereign Lord's authority (Act 47. Parl. 3. K. James VI), and as idolaters (Act 104. Parl. 7. K. James VI), but also in particular (by and attour the confession of faith) do abolish and condemn the Pope's authority and jurisdiction out of this land, and ordains the maintainers thereof to be punished (Act 2. Parl. 1. Act. 51. Parl. 3. Act 106. Parl. 7. Act 114. Parl. 12. of K. James VI); do condemn the Pope's erroneous doctrine, or any other erroneous doctrine repugnant to any of the Articles of the true and Christian religion publicly preached, and by law established in this realm; and ordains the spreaders or makers of books or libels, or letters or writs of that nature, to be punished (Act 46. Parl. 3. Act 106. Parl. 7. Act 24. Parl. 11. K. James VI); do condemn all baptism conform to the Pope's kirk, and the idolatry of the Mass; and ordains all sayers, wilful hearers, and concealers of the Mass, the maintainers and reseters of the Priests, Jesuits, trafficking Papists, to be punished without exception or restriction (Act 5. Parl. I. Act 120. Parl. 12. Act 164. Parl. 13. Act 193. Parl. 14. Act. I. Parl. 19. Act 5. Parl. 20 K. James VI); do condemn all erroneous books and writs containing erroneous doctrine against the religion presently professed, or containing superstitious rights and ceremonies papistical, whereby the people are greatly abused; and ordains the home-bringers of them to be punished (Act 25. Parl. 11. K. James VI); do condemn the monuments and dregs of bygone idolatry, as going to crosses, observing the festival days of saints, and such other superstitious and papistical rites, to the dishonour of God, contempt of true religion, and fostering of great errors among the people, and ordains the users of them to be punished for the second fault as idolaters (Act 104. Parl. 7. K. James VI).

Like as many Acts of Parliament are conceived for maintenance of God's true and Christian religion, and the purity thereof in doctrine and sacraments of the true Church of God, the liberty and freedom thereof in her national synodal assemblies, presbyteries, sessions, policy, discipline, and jurisdiction thereof, as that purity of religion and liberty of the Church was used, professed, exercised, preached, and confessed according to the reformation of religion in this realm. (As for instance: Act 99. Parl. 7. Act 23. Parl. 11. Act 114. Parl. 12. Act 160. Parl. 13. K. James VI, ratified by Act 4. K. Charles.) So that Act 6. Parl. I. and Act 68. Parl. 6. of K. James VI, in the year of God 1579, declares the ministers of the blessed evangel, whom God of His mercy had raised up or hereafter should raise, agreeing with them that then lived in doctrine and administration of the sacraments, and the people that professed Christ as He was then offered in the evangel, and doth communicate with the holy sacraments (as in the reformed Kirks of this realm they were presently administered) according to the confession of faith to be the true and holy Kirk of Christ Jesus within this realm, and discerns and declares all and sundry, who either gainsays the word of the evangel, received and approved as the heads of the confession of faith, professed in Parliament in the year of God 1560, specified also in the first Parliament of K. James VI, and ratified in this present Parliament, more particularly do specify; or that refuses the administration of the holy sacraments as they were then ministrated, to be no members of the said Kirk within this realm and true religion presently professed, so long as they keep themselves so divided from the society of Christ's body. And the subsequent Act 69. Parl. 6. K. James VI, declares that there is no other face of Kirk, nor other face of religion than was presently at that time by the favour of God established within this realm, which therefore is ever styled God's true religion, Christ's true religion, the true and Christian religion, and a perfect religion, which by manifold Acts of Parliament all within this realm are bound to profess to subscribe the Articles thereof, the confession of faith, to recant all doctrine and errors 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 and 197. Parl. 14 of K. James VI). And all magistrates, sheriffs, &c., on the one part, are ordained to search, apprehend, and punish all contraveners (for instance, Act 5. Parl. I. Act 104. Parl. 7. Act 25. Parl. 11. K. James VI). And that, notwithstanding of the King's Majesty's licences on the contrary, which are discharged and declared to be of no force, in so far as they tend in any ways to the prejudice and hindrance of the execution of the Acts of Parliament against Papists and adversaries of the true religion (Act 106. Parl. 7. K. James VI). On the other part, in Act 47. Parl. 3. K. James VI, it is declared and ordained, seeing the cause of God's true religion and His Highness's authority are so joined as the hurt of the one is common to both; and that none shall be reputed as loyal and faithful subjects to our Sovereign Lord or his authority, but be punishable as rebellers and gainstanders of the same, who shall not give their confession and make profession of the said true religion; and that they, who after defection shall give the confession of their faith of new, they shall promise to continue therein in time coming, to maintain our Sovereign Lord's authority, and at the uttermost of their power to fortify, assist, and maintain the true preachers and professors of Christ's religion, against whatsoever enemies and gainstanders of the same; and namely, against all such of whatsoever nation, estate, or degree they be of, that have joined or bound themselves, or have assisted or assists to set forward and execute the cruel 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 23rd of Feb., 1572, approved by Parliament the last of April 1573, ratified in Parliament 1578, and related Act 123. Parl. 12. of K. James VI, with this addition, that they are bound to resist all treasonable uproars and hostilities raised against the true religion, the King's Majesty and the true professors.

Like as all lieges are bound to maintain the King's Majesty's royal person and authority, the authority of Parliaments, without which neither any laws or lawful judicatories can be established (Act 130. Act 131. Parl. 8. K. James VI), and the subjects' liberties, who ought only to live and be governed by the King's laws, the common laws of this realm allanerly (Act 48. Parl. 3. K. James I, Act 79. Parl. 6. K. James VI, repeated in Act 131. Parl. 8. K. James VI), which if they be innovated or prejudged the commission anent the union of the two kingdoms of Scotland and England, which is the sole Act of 17 Parl. James VI, declares such confusion would ensue as this realm could be no more a free monarchy; because by the fundamental laws, ancient privileges, offices, and liberties of this kingdom, not only the princely authority of His Majesty's royal

descent hath been these many ages maintained, also the people's security of their lands, livings, rights, offices, liberties and dignities preserved. And therefore for the preservation of the said true religion, laws and liberties of this kingdom, it is statute by Act 8. Parl. 1. repeated in Act 99. Parl. 7. ratified in Act 23. Parl. 11 and 14. Act of K. James VI and 4 Act of K. Charles, that all Kings and Princes at their coronation and reception of their princely authority, shall make their faithful promise by their solemn oath in the presence of the Eternal God, that daring the whole time of their lives they shall serve the same Eternal God to the utmost 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 maintain the true religion of Christ Jesus, the preaching of His Holy Word, the due and right ministration of the sacraments now received and preached within this realm (according to the confession of faith immediately preceding); and shall abolish and gainstand all false religion contrary to the same; and shall rule the people committed to their charge according to the will and commandment of God revealed in His foresaid Word, and according to the lowable laws and constitutions received in this realm, no ways repugnant to the said will of the Eternal God; and shall procure to the utmost of their power, to the Kirk of God, and whole Christian people, true and perfect peace in all time coining; and that they shall be careful to root out of their Empire all heretics and enemies to the true worship of God, who shall be convicted by the true Kirk of God of the aforesaid crimes. Which was also observed by His Majesty at his Coronation in Edinburgh, 1633, as may be seen in the Order of the Coronation. In obedience to the commands of God, conform to the practice of the godly 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 council, commanding a general band to be made and subscribed by His Majesty's 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 above written, and a former large confession established by sundry acts of lawful general assemblies and of Parliament, unto which it hath relation, set down in public catechisms, and which had been for many years with a blessing from heaven preached and professed in this Kirk and kingdom, as God's undoubted truth grounded only upon His written Word. The other cause was for maintaining the King's Majesty, his person and estate; the true worship of God and the King's authority being so straitly joined, as that they had the same friends and common enemies, and did stand and fall together. And finally, being convinced in our minds, and confessing with our mouths, that the present and succeeding generations in this land are bound to keep the aforesaid national oath and subscription inviolable:

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 intencion 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; go 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, allurements 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 timely 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.