



FOR CHRIST'S CROWN
& COVENANT
THE SOLEMN LEAGUE & COVENANT



FOR REFORMATION AND DEFENSE OF RELIGION, the honour and happiness of the King, and the peace and safety of the three kingdoms of Scotland, England, and Ireland; agreed upon by Commissioners from the Parliament and Assembly of Divines in England, with Commissioners of the Convention of Estates and General Assembly of the Church of Scotland; approved by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, and by both Houses of Parliament, and the Assembly of Divines in England, and taken and subscribed by them, Anno 1643; and thereafter, by the said authority, taken and subscribed by all ranks in Scotland and England the same year; and ratified by act of the Parliament of Scotland, Anno 1644. (And again renewed in Scotland, with an Acknowledgement of Sins and Engagements to Duties, by all ranks, Anno 1648, and by Parliament, 1649; and taken and subscribed by KING CHARLES II., at Spey, June 23, 1650; and at Scoon, January 1, 1651.)

WE noblemen, barons, knights, gentlemen, citizens, burgesses, ministers of the Gospel, and commons of all sorts, in the kingdoms of Scotland, England, and Ireland, by the providence of GOD living under one king, and being of one reformed religion, having before our eyes the glory of GOD, and the advancement of the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour JESUS CHRIST, the honour and happiness of the king's majesty and his posterity, and the true public liberty, safety, and peace of the kingdoms, wherein every one's private condition is included: and calling to mind the treacherous and bloody plots, conspiracies, attempts, and practices of the enemies of GOD, against the true religion and professors thereof in all places, especially in these three kingdoms, ever since the reformation of religion; and how much their rage, power, and presumption, are of late, and at this time, increased and exercised, whereof the deplorable state of the Church and kingdom of Ireland, the distressed estate of the Church and kingdom of England, and the dangerous estate of the Church and kingdom of Scotland, are present and public testimonies: we have now at last (after other means of supplication, remonstrance, protestation, and sufferings), for the preservation of ourselves and our religion from utter ruin and destruction, according to the commendable practice of these kingdoms in former times, and the example of GOD's people in other nations, after mature deliberation, resolved and determined to enter into a Mutual and Solemn League and Covenant, wherein we all subscribe, and each one of us for himself, with our hands lifted up to the Most High GOD, do swear,

I. That we shall sincerely, really, and constantly, through the grace of GOD, endeavour, in our several places and callings, the preservation of the reformed religion in the Church of Scotland, in doctrine, worship, discipline, and government, against our common enemies; the reformation of religion in the kingdoms of England and Ireland, in doctrine, worship, discipline, and government, according to the Word of GOD, and the example of the best reformed Churches; and shall endeavour to bring the Churches of GOD in the three kingdoms to the nearest conjunction and uniformity in religion, Confession of Faith, Form of Church Government, Directory for Worship and Catechising; that we, and our posterity after us, may, as brethren, live in faith and love, and the LORD may delight to dwell in the midst of us.

II. That we shall, in like manner, without respect of persons, endeavour the extirpation of Popery, Prelacy (that is, Church government by archbishops, bishops, their chancellors and commissioners, deans, deans and chapters, archdeacons, and all other ecclesiastical officers depending on that hierarchy), superstition, heresy, schism, profaneness, and whatsoever shall be found contrary to sound doctrine and the power of Godliness; lest we partake in other men's sins, and thereby be in danger to receive of their plagues; and that the LORD may be one, and his name one, in the three kingdoms.

III. We shall, with the same sincerity, reality, and constancy, in our several vocations, endeavour, with our estates and lives, mutually to preserve the rights and privileges of the Parliaments, and the liberties of the kingdoms; and to preserve and defend

the king's majesty's person and authority, in the preservation and defence of the true religion and liberties of the kingdoms; that the world may bear witness with our consciences of our loyalty, and that we have no thoughts or intentions to diminish his majesty's just power and greatness.

IV. We shall also, with all faithfulness, endeavour the discovery of all such as have been or shall be incendiaries, malignants, or evil instruments, by hindering the reformation of religion, dividing the king from his people, or one of the kingdoms from another, or making any faction or parties amongst the people, contrary to this *League and Covenant*; that they may be brought to public trial, and receive condign punishment, as the degree of their offences shall require or deserve, or the supreme judicatories of both kingdoms respectively, or others having power from them for that effect, shall judge convenient.

V. And whereas the happiness of a blessed peace between these kingdoms, denied in former times to our progenitors, is, by the good providence of GOD, granted unto us, and hath been lately concluded and settled by both Parliaments; we shall, each one of us, according to our place and interest, endeavour that they may remain conjoined in a firm peace and union to all posterity; and that justice may be done upon the willful opposers thereof, in manner expressed in the precedent article.

VI. We shall also, according to our places and callings, in this common cause of religion, liberty, and peace of the kingdoms, assist and defend all those that enter into this *League and Covenant*, in the maintaining and pursuing thereof; and shall not suffer ourselves, directly or indirectly, by whatsoever combination, persuasion, or terror, to be divided or withdrawn from this blessed union and conjunction, whether to make defection to the contrary part, or to give ourselves to a detestable indifferency or neutrality in this cause, which so much concerneth the glory of GOD, the good of the kingdoms, and honour of the king; but shall, all the days of our lives, zealously and constantly continue therein against all opposition, and promote the same, according to our power, against all lets and impediments whatsoever; and what we are not able ourselves to suppress or overcome, we shall reveal and make known, that it may be timely prevented or removed: All which we shall do as in the sight of GOD.

And, because these kingdoms are guilty of many sins and provocations against GOD, and his Son JESUS CHRIST, as is too manifest by our present distresses and dangers, the fruits thereof; we profess and declare, before GOD and the world, our unfeigned desire to be humbled for our own sins, and for the sins of these kingdoms; especially that we have not, as we ought, valued the inestimable benefit of the Gospel; that we have not laboured for the purity and power thereof; and that we have not endeavoured to receive CHRIST in our hearts, nor to walk worthy of him in our lives; which are the causes of other sins and transgression so much abounding amongst us; and our true and unfeigned purpose, desire, and endeavour, for ourselves, and all others under our power and charge, both in public and in private, in all duties we owe to GOD and man, to amend our lives, and each one to go before another in the example of a real reformation; that the LORD may turn away his wrath and heavy indignation, and establish these Churches and kingdoms in truth and peace. And this *Covenant* we make in the presence of ALMIGHTY GOD, the Searcher of all hearts, with a true intention to perform the same, as we shall answer at that great day, when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed; most humbly beseeching the LORD to strengthen us by his HOLY SPIRIT for this end, and to bless our desires and proceedings with such success, as may be deliverance and safety to his people, and encouragement to other Christian Churches, groaning under, or in danger of the yoke of antichristian tyranny, to join in the same or like association and covenant, to the glory of GOD, the enlargement of the kingdom of JESUS CHRIST, and the peace and tranquillity of Christian kingdoms and commonwealths. 20

Jeremiah 50:5 "Come, and let us join ourselves to the LORD in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten;" Proverbs 25:5 "Take away the Wicked from before the king, and his throne shall be established in righteousness;" 2 Chronicles 15:15, "And all Judah rejoiced at the oath: for they had sworn with all their heart, and sought him with their whole desire; and he was found of them: and the LORD gave them rest round about."

THE SOLEMN LEAGUE & COVENANT. The historian of the Westminster Assembly William M. Hetherington wrote about this religious and civil league (the purpose of which was to reform and preserve the Reformed religion in the Kingdoms of Scotland, England and Ireland) that it was a document which we cannot help regarding as the noblest and best, in its essential nature and principles, of all that are recorded among the international transactions of the world.¹ This Covenant exercised influence on and outlined the work for one of the most famous and longest sitting assemblies of Reformed theologians, the Westminster Assembly of Divines (1643–1652), which resulted in the Westminster Confession of Faith, Larger and Shorter Catechisms, Form of Church Government and Directory for the Public Worship of God, all of which together have expressed the historic views of Presbyterianism for centuries. The text for this limited printing has been taken from the text as preserved in the “traditional text” of the many printings of the Westminster Standards over the centuries,² compared and corrected against the earliest printings of the Covenant published in 1643. Modern spelling and punctuation conventions have been used. The preliminary version, *The new oath or covenant to be taken by all persons within the two kingdomes of England and Scotland*, printed September 4, 1643, has many differences with the final version, most of which are related to changing the Covenant to include Ireland, making the Covenant between the three kingdoms. Aside from minor variations in the “incidentals”—spelling, punctuation, etc.—textual variants affecting the words are few. These are as follows: (1) In the preamble which begins “We noblemen,” the preliminary and all English editions have “England” first, but except for the early versions of Evan Tyler, the Scottish editions almost immediately revised the order to read “Scotland, England, and Ireland.” This revision was retained even in the English printings of the first collections of the productions of the Westminster Assembly. The revised order has been retained in this printing. Also, the earliest editions have “state ... Ireland ... estate ... England ... estate ... Scotland” (as opposed to “state” or “estate” in all cases), which was retained in the traditional text and so here. (2) Same ¶; John Rushworth in his *Historical Collections* moved the parentheses at “last (after ... sufferings),” to “(now at last).” (3) In Paragraph I, Rushworth inserted a “we” before “shall endeavour to bring.” (4) Two modern errors have occurred in an “electronic” text apparently first made available at the Center for Reformed Theology and Apologetics between June 10, 1998 and November 11, 1998, which has been replicated across the Internet.³ The first appears in Paragraph III where “other” has been added at “have no thoughts.” (5) In Paragraph IV, Rushworth changed “this League” to “the League.” (6) In Paragraph V, Rushworth changed “place and interest” to “places and interest.” (7) Edward Husbands printed a number of editions of the Covenant in 1643. In one example (Wing 544469) in Paragraph VI, the “to” is dropped from “or to give ourselves.” Rushworth duplicates this error, apparently independently. See (12) below. (8) Same ¶, “good of the kingdomes” was changed to “good of the kingdom.” This has a complex history. The preliminary edition has the singular, but this was changed in the finalized form and all the 1643 editions have the plural. The 17th century editions of the Westminster Standards which include the Covenant retain the plural. However, Watson’s edition of 1708 and Cox’s of 1717 have the singular. This was corrected in the 1728 edition of Lumisden and Robertson, but their second printing of 1736 again reverted to the singular and it has remained singular

since then in the Scottish editions of the Standards. (9) Last ¶, “own” is dropped from “our own sins” in the 1721 edition of Rushworth as given at British History Online (<http://www.britishhistory.ac.uk>).⁴ The prior editions of 1692 and 1708 are correct. This may be a variant within the 1721, as citations of this edition in various histories are sometimes correct.⁵ (10) Last ¶, the second of the Internet text errors is a missing “in” from before “private.” (11) Last ¶, Rushworth inserts an “a” between the words “be deliverance.” (12) Last ¶, toward the end of the last section, “to other Christian Churches” was changed to read “to the Christian Churches.” This was introduced in Husbands’ Sept 22nd printing, and persisted through his printings of the 23rd, 27th, and 28th. It was corrected in his September 29th printing and in his subsequent printings. No other publications of the Covenant in 1643 had the error. However, Husbands’ erroneous text was picked up by Rushworth, who must have used one of these incorrect editions as his source, but not apparently the aforementioned in (7), because that edition is correct here. (13) A final error has persisted in the traditional text which involves an addition of a bible verse to the original epigraph on the title page officially approved by the House of Commons, which only had three bible verses: Jeremiah 50:5, Proverbs 25:5, and 2 Chronicles 15:15. A change apparently was made beginning with the 1725 edition of the Scottish Standards printed for the Reformed Presbyterians by Thomas Lumisden and John Robertson.⁶ To the original three was added Galatians 3:15, “Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though it be but a man’s covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto.” This was also added to the 1728 Lumisden & Robertson edition of the Westminster Standards,⁷ and from there it has persisted in the text to this day.

1. “Introductory Essay,” in Robert Shaw, *An Exposition of the Confession of Faith of the Westminster Assembly of Divines*, Eighth Edition (Glasgow: Blackie and Son, 1857) xxiii–xxviii.
2. See Chris Coldwell, “The Development of the Traditional Form of The Westminster Standards,” *The Confessional Presbyterian*, volume 1 (2005) 168–175.
3. John Rushworth, *Historical Collections*, volume 5: A Continuation, Part III, Vol. II (1692, 478–479).
4. See CRTA at <http://www.reformed.org/>. The Internet Archive WayBack Machine shows that the transcription was not yet posted on June 10th but had been posted by the time of the next archive dated November 11, 1998.
5. Evan Tyler’s illustrated edition in broadside and pamphlet has the error “for our, & for the sins” which appears to be a unique variant not picked up by any other printings.
6. John Rushworth, *Historical Collections of Private Passages of State: Volume 5: 1642–1645* (1721) 478; Cf. Samuel Rawson Gardiner, *The Constitutional Documents of the Puritan Revolution, 1625–1660* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1906) 271.
7. “House of Commons Journal Volume 3: 21 September 1643,” *Journal of the House of Commons: volume 3: 1643–1644* (1802) 249–251.
8. *The Confessions of Faith, Catechisms, Directories, Form of Government, Discipline, etc. Of Publick Authority on the Church of Scotland* (Edinburgh: Printed by Thomas Lumisden and John Robertson, 1725).
9. *The Confession of Faith, the Larger and Shorter catechisms ... Solemn League ...* (Edinburgh: Printed by Thomas Lumisden and John Robertson ..., 1728).

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