

---

# **The Covenanters, Unity in Religion, and Uniformity of Church Government in the 1640s: Presbytery by Coercion or Co-operation?**

J E F F R E Y   S T E P H E N

**I**n the winter and spring of 1640-41, a group of Scots commissioners were in London for peace negotiations between the Covenanters and Charles I following the conclusion of the Bishops' Wars.<sup>1</sup> On 10th March 1641 they published a paper containing proposals for unity in religion and uniformity of church government. The proposals were prepared by Alexander Henderson at the close of 1640 and were regarded as an integral part of a lasting peace. They were offered in an effort to secure "peace for ever and not only peace but perfect amity and a more near union than before". The Covenanters maintained that apart from being the means to serve God and save their souls, religion was also "the base foundation of kingdoms and the estates. . . . Nothing so powerful to divide the hearts of people as division in religion; nothing so strong to unite them as unity in religion." To that end they proposed that there ought to be "one Confession of Faith, one form of Catechism, one Directory for all parts of the worship of God, and for prayer, preaching, administration of sacraments. &c., and one form of church government in all the churches of his Majesty's dominions." They believed that

---

<sup>1</sup> There were fifteen members of the commission of which six were ministers: Alexander Henderson, George Gillespie, Robert Blair, Robert Baillie, John Smith, and Eleazer Borthwick.

religious unity was so desirable that “all sound divines and politicians are for it”, but as it was a work of such magnitude they suggested that the issue of church government should be addressed more immediately. They offered several reasons why the Church of Scotland was an excellent model upon which to base uniformity of church government.

Firstly, the government of the Church of Scotland was the same as other reformed churches and had been universally received along with reformed doctrine and worship. The government of the Church of England, on the other hand, had not changed along with doctrine at the reformation. England may have rejected the Pope but it had not rejected his hierarchy; something that had been the ground of suspicion among the reformed churches.

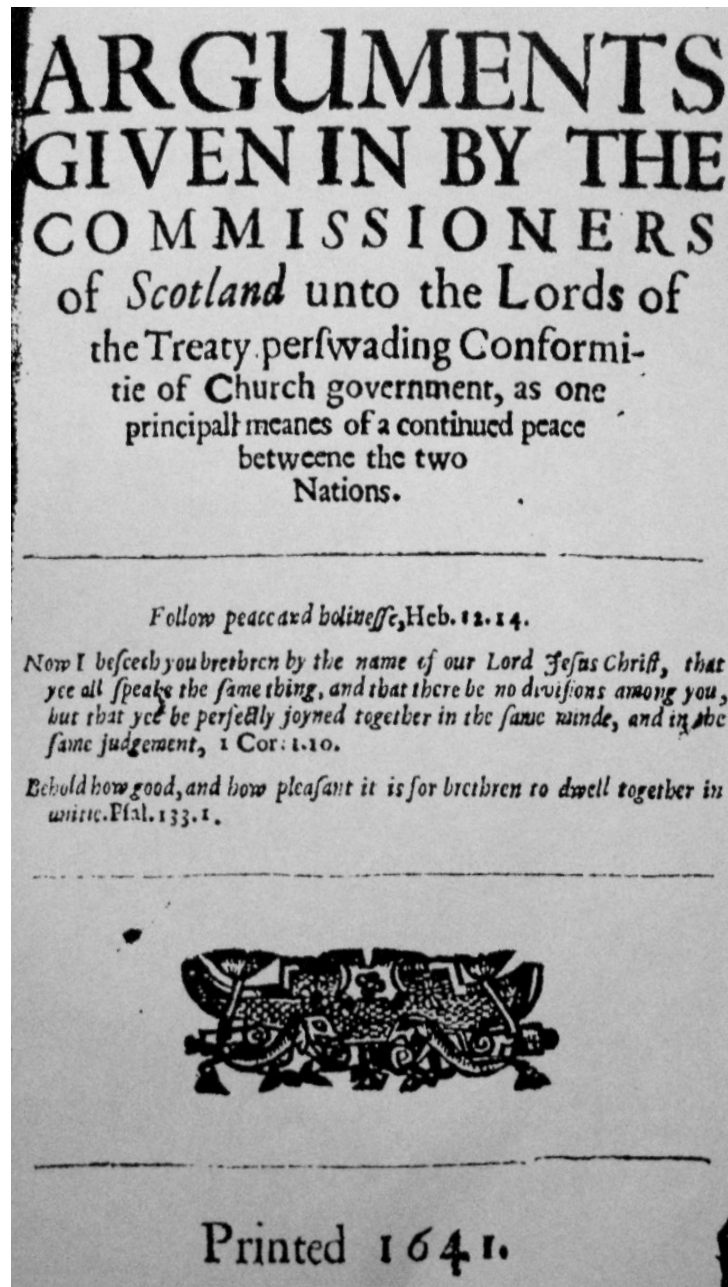
Secondly, the Church of Scotland had been troubled for a considerable time by interference from England’s bishops who had been involved in settling prelacy in Scotland, had consecrated corrupt ministers of the Church of Scotland as bishops, had sought to change the form of worship of the church, and had constantly worked to overthrow the reformed church in Scotland. This interference was contrasted with the position adopted by the Church of Scotland, which had never at any time sought to interfere in the doctrine, worship, ceremonies or discipline of the Church of England. Their current desire to seek reformation in England was not driven by a presumptuous desire to reform England so much as a genuine fear that as long as England continued unreformed their covenanted reformation was in danger from similar interference.

In the third place, all the reformed churches recognised the offices of pastor, doctor, elder and deacon to be of divine appointment, whereas prelacy and the office of bishop were not. As a consequence, fourthly, the Church of Scotland, “hath abjured Episcopal government as having no warrant in scripture, and by solemn oath and covenant divers times before, and now again of late hath established the government of the church by assemblies; but England, neither having abjured the one nor sworn the other hath liberty from all bands of this kind to make choice of that which is most warrantable by the Word of God”.

Finally, and somewhat charitably, they stated that if Charles accepted reformation upon those grounds he would accomplish the union that his father had sought and his royal authority would be strengthened.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> *Arguments given in by the Commissioners of Scotland unto the Lords of the Treaty, perswading Conformity of Church Government as one principall means of a continued peace between the two nations* (1641); Published by William Hetherington as, *Our Desires concerning Unity in*



*The Arguments of 1641.*

*Religion, and Uniformity of Church Government, as a Special Mean to conserve Peace in his Majesty's Dominions, in History of the Westminster Assembly of Divines* (Edinburgh, 1843), p. 383. Proposals for unity and uniformity of religion were not proposals for a church union or the creation of a British church. Distinctive national structures would be maintained in church as they would be in the state. The issues surrounding the London negotiations are discussed in, J. D. Ogilvie, "Church Union in 1641", *Records of the Scottish Church History Society*, Vol. 1 (1926), pp. 143-60; Charles L. Hamilton, "The Basis for Scottish Efforts to Create a Reformed Church in England, 1640-41", *Church History*, Vol. 30 (1961), pp. 171-8; Winthrop S. Hudson, "The Scottish Effort to Presbyterianise the Church of England during the Early Months of the Long Parliament", *Church History*, Vol. 8 (1939), pp. 255-82.

## 1. Reformation Principles and Confessional Union

The intervention of the Scots commissioners was highly significant in terms of the relationship that developed between the kingdoms in the 1640s and '50s, but before looking at the consequences and the historiography it is necessary to examine the reasons behind it, the roots of which lay in the reformation.

While Scotland and England had both embraced Protestantism, the principles applied in either kingdom were very different and accounted for the divergence of their respective religious cultures. Scotland's reformation had been far more thorough than England's. England's reformation had been both led and limited by the "godly prince", while in Scotland it was accomplished in spite of crown opposition, and governed, thanks to Knox, by scriptural principles rather than political expediency. Scotland applied what was later to be called the "regulative principle": that the acceptable way of worshipping God was to do so only in the manner He had appointed. In the absence of any command or scriptural example, a practice was forbidden. Knox outlined this principle when writing on the mass in 1550, "All wirschipping, honouring, or service inventit by the braine of man in the religion of God without his express commandment, is idolatrie".<sup>3</sup> The principle is also outlined in the Scots Confession of 1560, the First Book of Discipline, the Second Book of Discipline, and in the Negative Confession of 1581.<sup>4</sup>

The Anglican position, as expressed in article thirty-four of the Thirty-Nine Articles (the Church of England's confessional standard of 1563), stated that "Every particular or national Church hath authority to ordain, change, and abolish, Ceremonies or Rites of the Church ordained only by man's authority". The church could not change what God had ordained and nothing could be "ordained against God's Word". However, the church could ordain rites and ceremonies where there was no scriptural injunction against them.<sup>5</sup> In the Church of England, if some aspect of worship was not expressly forbidden then it was allowed

---

<sup>3</sup> David Laing (ed.), *The Works of John Knox* (6 vols., Wodrow Society, Edinburgh, 1846-64), Vol. 3, p. 34.

<sup>4</sup> G. D. Henderson (ed.), *Scots Confession, 1560 and Negative Confession, 1581* (Edinburgh, 1937), pp. 67, 103-110; Knox, *Works*, Vol. 2, p. 185; David Calderwood, *History of the Kirk of Scotland* (8 vols., Wodrow Society, Edinburgh, 1842-49), Vol. 3, p. 530.

<sup>5</sup> See P. Schaff and D. Schaff (eds.), *The Creeds of Christendom* (3 vols., Michigan, 1983), Vol. 3, pp. 508-9.

and treated as indifferent. Take for example the practice of kneeling during the Lord's Supper. The Anglican position was that kneeling at the Lord's Table was indifferent and therefore acceptable. The English Privy Council put this to Knox in 1553 at the time when he was serving as a minister in England during the reign of Edward VI. Knox responded with the classic reformed position that Christ's action was done without kneeling; kneeling was man's addition or imagination and therefore contrary to Christ's institution.<sup>6</sup> As far as Presbyterians were concerned, in this context indifferent was synonymous with unlawful.

The application of the regulative principle was the reason why the Scottish reformation was so thorough. It was at the heart of subsequent Presbyterian claims that Scotland had enjoyed the purest reformation of any Protestant church; purer than England, France, or even Geneva. As Archibald Johnston of Wariston put it, "The Kirk of Scotland after the reformation of Religion did by degrees attaine to as great perfection both in doctrine & discipline as any other reformed kirk in Europe".<sup>7</sup> This claim was repeated on a regular basis for the best part of two hundred years following the reformation and it became something of a badge of honour. It also had a significant impact upon Scottish identity, certainly among those influenced by and associated with the reformed church. In their eyes, it set them apart, not just from the Church of Rome but also from all other reformed churches. It made the Kirk highly distinctive; unique among churches. As the Covenanters explained in 1640, the Church of Scotland had travelled the farthest of all reformed churches, from the Church of Rome.<sup>8</sup> They regarded their reformation as distinctive to Scotland although not distinctively Scottish. It was an

---

<sup>6</sup> Knox, *Works*, Vol. 3, pp. 86-7. The dispute within the English congregation at Frankfurt was over the use of ceremonies and Knox defended their exclusion on the same grounds. See Knox, *Works*, Vol. 4, pp. 9-68.

<sup>7</sup> *A Short Relation of the State of the Kirk of Scotland since the Reformation of Religion, to the present time for information, and advertisement to our Brethren in the Kirk of England, By an hearty Wellwisher to both Kingdoms* (Edinburgh, 1638). See also, Knox, *Works*, Vol. 2, p. 264; George Gillespie, "A Dispute against the English Popish Ceremonies obtruded upon the Church of Scotland", in *The Works of George Gillespie* (2 vols., Edmonton, 1991), Vol. 1, p. viii; Gilbert Rule, *A Sermon preached before His Grace the King's Commissioner and the Three Estates of Parliament, May the 25th, 1690* (Edinburgh, 1690), p. 13; William Veitch, *Two Sermons preached before His Majesties High Commissioner, and the Estates of Parliament by the appointment of the Provincial Synod of Lothian and Tweeddale. Upon Sabbath the 7th of May 1693. Unto which is subjoined the Sermon Preached at the opening up of the Synod, May 2 1693* (Edinburgh, 1693), pp. 25, 14.

<sup>8</sup> *A Remonstrance Concerning the present Troubles, From the meeting of the Estates of the Kingdome of Scotland, Aprill 16. unto the Parliament of England* (Edinburgh, 1640), p. 3.

application of biblical principles that they believed ought to apply generally across the universal Catholic Church of which they were a part.

A consequence of the thoroughness of the Scottish reformation was that the Scots saw their church as the model to which all other churches ought to aspire; therefore it was not a complete surprise to find them offering the Kirk as a model for reform in England in 1641. The Second Book of Discipline recorded their belief that one of the benefits following their reformation was that they would “becum an example and paterne of gude and godly order to uther nations, countries and kirks, professing the same religion with us”.<sup>9</sup> Knox and his successors had been critical of the lack of a more thorough reformation in England and urged further reform.<sup>10</sup> As far as the Scots were concerned, the sentiments expressed by John Forbes, minister at Alford, perfectly summed up the situation. The reformation in England had merely abolished the Pope but not popery.<sup>11</sup> This view of a lack of a thorough reformation in England was shared by some English clergy. Puritans unsuccessfully urged Elizabeth and later James VI & I to implement further reforms and looked to Scotland as their model.<sup>12</sup> It was that same spirit that the Covenanters sought to encourage in the 1640s.

The Scots urged England to pursue a more thorough reformation, not just because, in their opinion, the principles that had governed their own reformation were biblical, but also because further reform would help accomplish a model of Anglo-Scottish union, which might be regarded as a confessional confederation in which, as Knox expressed

<sup>9</sup> Calderwood, *History*, Vol. 3, p. 554.

<sup>10</sup> Knox, *Works*, Vol. 4, pp. 33, 44. Some examples of such Scottish encouragement were outlined by the General Assembly in 1642 in a letter to the English Parliament, see Alexander Peterkin (ed.), *Records of the Kirk of Scotland, containing the Acts and Proceedings of the General Assemblies from the year 1638 downwards, as authenticated by the clerks of assembly* (Edinburgh, 1838), pp. 324-6.

<sup>11</sup> David Laing (ed.), *An Apologetical Narration of the State and Government of the Kirk of Scotland since the Reformation. By William Scot, minister of Cupar. Certaine Records touching the estate of the kirk in the years MDCV & MDCVI. By John Forbes, minister of Alford* (Wodrow Society, Edinburgh, 1846), p. 374. The comments were made in the context of the union of the crowns in 1603. They were repeated by the Covenanters in 1641, see above.

<sup>12</sup> James Kirk, *Patterns of Reform* (Edinburgh, 1989), pp. 334-67; Robert Pitcairn (ed.), *The Autobiography and Diary of Mr James Melvill, with a continuation of the Diary* (Wodrow Society, Edinburgh, 1842), p. 555; Kenneth Fincham and Peter Lake, “The Ecclesiastical Policies of James I and Charles I”, in Kenneth Fincham (ed.), *The Early Stuart Church, 1603-1642* (Macmillan, London, 1993), p. 26; John Row, *The History of The Kirk of Scotland, from the year 1558 to August 1637* (Wodrow Society, Edinburgh, 1842), pp. 220-1; Scot, *An Apologetical Narration*, p. 125.

it, the two Protestant nations would be united, “for ever in godly concord”.<sup>13</sup> Given the background of the counter-reformation, the continental wars of religion, and the military threat posed by France and Spain, such a union (more than a mere common Protestantism) would give an added dimension to their security.

Knox’s vision and ambitions were shared by his successors. The 1583 General Assembly urged James to instruct his ambassador to England to make a “Unione and Band” with England and other Christian Princes professing the true religion.<sup>14</sup> In 1590, ministers writing to Elizabeth hoped God would grant England wisdom to reform “the great present abuses of your church government, according to the Word of God, to the glorie of his name, and sure establishing of amitie between the two realms”.<sup>15</sup> Likewise James Melville, writing in 1604 in the aftermath of the union of the crowns under James, looked forward to a future when both kingdoms would be united in a more perfect union accomplished through the success of the gospel.<sup>16</sup> While the Scots consistently sought confessional union with England, they were consistently obliged to reject and repudiate overtures for union on the grounds that England’s reformation had been insufficient and that any union with an unreformed England invariably threatened to dilute or diminish the reformation in Scotland. Thus, Knox gave short shrift to an attempt by the English government to explore the possibility of uniformity of religion in 1562 when ministers were reported as having run almost wild at rumours that Queen Mary might embrace the religion of England. Knox in a typically robust sermon killed the idea of an accommodation stone dead.<sup>17</sup> Likewise and for the same reasons, in 1571 the reformers rejected Regent Morton’s policy of conformity with England.

---

<sup>13</sup> Knox, *Works*, Vol. 4, p. 394.

<sup>14</sup> Alexander Peterkin (ed.), *Book of the Universall Kirk of Scotland: wherein the heads and conclusionis devysit be the ministers and commissioners of the particular kirks thereof are specially expressed and contained* (Edinburgh, 1839), p. 271.

<sup>15</sup> Calderwood, *History*, Vol. 5, p. 77.

<sup>16</sup> *Diary of James Melvill*, p. 554.

<sup>17</sup> Kirk, *Patterns of Reform*, pp. 339, 349-56; *Diary of James Melvill*, p. 31; Calderwood, *History*, Vol. 3, p. 206.

## 2. The Union of the Crowns

A pivotal moment in the relationship between the kingdoms, both politically and ecclesiastically was the union of the crowns in 1603 when James VI of Scotland succeeded Elizabeth to the English throne. The event raised Presbyterian hopes that there would be further reformation within the Church of England.<sup>18</sup> They believed that the union of the crowns would lead to their long awaited confessional union. However, James, the most enthusiastic unionist of his day, envisaged a united kingdom of Great Britain ruled by the Stuart dynasty in which two ancient peoples, whose relations had hitherto been defined by mutual hostility, would be united in hearts and minds, dynasty, parliaments, administration, legal system, economy, and religion. Unfortunately for James, his subjects shared neither his vision nor his enthusiasm. Unfortunately for Presbyterians, James's plan for religious uniformity was based upon an Anglican rather than a Presbyterian model. While his desire to anglicise the Scottish church had begun a few years previously, his accession to the English throne provided him with the power and influence to pursue it with greater rigour.

Presbyterians did not have long to wait for James to show his hand. He had left for London amid disingenuous claims that having settled both Kirk and kingdom he had no intentions of altering either.<sup>19</sup> The church insisted that it had an interest in any union discussions; it was believed that a union of the kingdoms could not take place without a union of the churches and the differences between them meant that they could not be united unless one ceded to the other.<sup>20</sup> As James had told his new English subjects that their religion would not be changed, the Kirk feared for its future and purity.<sup>21</sup> In 1604 James held a conference on church matters at Hampton Court, the outcome of which simultaneously dashed Scottish hopes of a truly confessional union and raised fears of an Anglican uniformity being imposed upon them. This outcome was the cause of "gryt disapoyntment, discouragement and disgrace of all that craiffed and liukit for reformatione".<sup>22</sup> While James

---

<sup>18</sup> Scot, *An Apologetical Narration*, p. 125.

<sup>19</sup> *Diary of James Melvill*, p. 554.

<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*, p. 555.

<sup>21</sup> Horatio H. Brown (ed.), *Calendar of State Papers and Manuscripts Relating to English Affairs existing in the Archives and Collections of Venice and in other Libraries of Northern Italy, 1603-1607* (London, 1900), Vol. 10, p. 22.

<sup>22</sup> *Diary of Mr James Melvill*, p. 555.



promised a number of reforms, in return he demanded “conformity in an Episcopalian church”. He rejected puritan complaints about discipline and ceremonies, demonstrated his hostility towards Presbyterianism by declaring that Presbytery agreed as well with Monarchy as God with the devil, and demanded that all clergy acknowledge “his temporal and spiritual supremacy, as well as the scriptural warrant for the prayer book, the degrees of bishop, priest and deacon, and the articles of religion”.<sup>23</sup> Hampton Court was a warning to the Scots that James stood for the maintenance of prelacy and the popish ceremonies that went with it.<sup>24</sup> The tone in Scotland changed from hope and expectation to the foreboding expressed by William Scot who wrote, “had we not need then to doubt of the stability of our discipline”.<sup>25</sup>

Presbyterian fears were compounded by their lack of confidence in those who would negotiate union. According to John Forbes of Alford, the list submitted by James was made up mostly of the new nobility, papists, and supporters of bishops. The church argued that the bishops as agents of the court would not act in its best interests although as the Kirk’s estate in Parliament they were supposed to be subject to the authority and direction of the Assembly.<sup>26</sup> Of further concern was James’s refusal to allow an Assembly to meet before or during the sitting of Parliament in April 1604, nor indeed until the union issue was settled. James was angry at reports that ministers were “fasting and preaching maliciouslie againis the union of the kingdoms”.<sup>27</sup> He insisted that discussions on union were no concern of the church and would be restricted to Parliament alone. If he thought this was likely to help his cause he was disappointed. Parliament passed two significant acts in 1604 that went some way to satisfying Presbyterian concerns, enough to

---

<sup>23</sup> Fincham and Lake, “Ecclesiastical Policies of James I and Charles I”, p. 26. See also Martin A. Simpson, “The Hampton Court Conference”, *Records of the Scottish Church History Society*, Vol. 21 (1981), pp. 27-41.

<sup>24</sup> Row, *History*, p. 220-1; *Diary of James Melville*, p. 555.

<sup>25</sup> Scot, *An Apologetical Relation*, p. 125.

<sup>26</sup> *Diary of James Melville*, pp. 556-9.

<sup>27</sup> Quoted in Alan R. MacDonald, “James VI and the General Assembly 1586-1618”, in Julian Goodare and Michael Lynch (eds.), *The Reign of James VI* (Tuckwell Press, East Linton, 2000), p. 179. James had prorogued the meeting of the General Assembly indefinitely but a group of ministers defied the ruling and met in Aberdeen in 1605. Six were tried, found guilty of High Treason and banished to the Continent. An account of the events at Aberdeen and the subsequent prosecutions was written by John Forbes, minister at Alford, who had been chosen Moderator. See Forbes, *Certain Records*, pp. 345-558.

limit their protests in the expectation that at some point the activities and objections of other groups would bring the union project to an end.<sup>28</sup> The Scots Act of Commission on 11th July declared that the fundamental laws were to be left out of negotiations.<sup>29</sup> A number of the nobility led by the Earl of Morton secured an act which ratified and approved all former acts made in favour of the Kirk and prevented the commissioners from agreeing to anything which would be hurtful or prejudicial to its doctrine and discipline.<sup>30</sup> James was dismayed at the lack of enthusiasm shown by his countrymen but his hand had been strengthened by his accession to the crown of England and this would enable him to pursue his reforms even if religion was not included in the negotiations.<sup>31</sup>

While the union project foundered, James continued with his policy of imposing ecclesiastical conformity upon the Scottish church. Central to this was establishing royal supremacy in all ecclesiastical matters. He wanted to replicate in Scotland the position he inherited in England. Strengthening Episcopal government in Scotland was an important element in establishing and maintaining political control.<sup>32</sup> Bishops were more compatible with his views of government than Presbyterians imbued with the ideology of Knox and Buchanan. Bishops were appointed by him, were accountable to him, and could be expected to act on his behalf in Parliament and Privy Council, and to implement royal policy in all ecclesiastical affairs. It was a thorough-going Erastianism. Episcopalians in Scotland were predominately the king's placemen who would support his policy because they owed their position to him. They supported religious union because it meant power, position, and authority as well as the introduction into the church of the type of government and practice they preferred.<sup>33</sup> There was no attempt to replicate the government of the Church of England. James was content with an Episcopal hierarchy controlling a Presbyterian system

<sup>28</sup> *Diary of James Melville*, p. 556.

<sup>29</sup> Calderwood, *History*, Vol. 6, pp. 262-3.

<sup>30</sup> T. Thomson and C. Innes (eds.), *The Acts of the Parliament of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1814-75).

<sup>31</sup> Bruce Galloway, *The Union of England and Scotland, 1603-1608* (John Donald, Edinburgh, 1986), pp. xlv-xlv, 25.

<sup>32</sup> B. Levack, *The Formation of the British State: England, Scotland and the Union 1603-1707* (Oxford, 1987), pp. 106, 127.

<sup>33</sup> Scot, *An Apologetical Narration*, pp. 125-6; Row, *History*, pp. 220-4.

of Sessions, Presbyteries, and Synods. There were no free General Assemblies. The few that were held were called by James, packed with his placemen, and designed to promote his policies. All were declared unlawful by the covenanting Assembly at Glasgow in 1638. Suspicions that he intended to subject the Scottish church to the jurisdiction of York or Canterbury or that the Archbishop of Canterbury would become primate of Britain, were unfounded.<sup>34</sup> Liturgical innovations known as the Five Articles of Perth were imposed upon the church in 1618 but the strength of opposition James faced in doing so forced him to step back from a policy of greater liturgical conformity.

Charles I pursued this conformity with greater determination but with less skill than his father. Charles and Archbishop William Laud claimed that they did not seek to bring the Irish and Scottish churches into conformity with the Church of England but to bring all three into conformity with the whole catholic church of Christ. However, this was hardly the case as the Church of England was ultimately the model to which the other two were to be conformed.<sup>35</sup> His policy was not simply the continuation of his father's. There were distinct differences in approach that made it even more unpopular. While James saw himself an Episcopalian and Calvinist in doctrine, Charles was a convinced Episcopalian and anti-Calvinist with a distinct preference for ceremonial and liturgical aspects of worship and for liturgical reform. When implementing policy, Charles did not bother to pack Assemblies as his father had; he simply refused to allow Assemblies to meet. Policy would be implemented by means of royal prerogative and bishops. The instruments of uniformity were the Book of Canons published in 1636 and the Book of Common Prayer, otherwise known as Laud's liturgy. These contained the only form of worship that Charles would

---

<sup>34</sup> John Morrill, "A British Patriarchy? Ecclesiastical Imperialism under the Early Stuarts", in Anthony Fletcher and Peter Roberts (eds.), *Religion, Culture and Society in Early Modern Britain* (Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 217; John Spottiswood, *The History of the Church of Scotland* (3 vols., Bannatyne Club, Edinburgh, 1844-50), Vol. 3, p. 209. The consecration of three Scottish bishops in London in 1610 was a one-off event because James believed there were no bishops in the Scottish church who could perform the function. The intention was that the three bishops would return to Scotland and consecrate the rest of the Scots bishops, which they did in January 1611. Spottiswood was reported as having insisted at the time that the action did not imply Scottish subjection to Canterbury or York and the ceremony was performed by the bishops of London, Ely, and Bath.

<sup>35</sup> Morrill, "A British Patriarchy?", p. 225; David L. Smith, *A History of the Modern British Isles 1603-1707* (Blackwell, Oxford, 1998), p. 102.

countenance in his Scottish church and he demanded their observance.<sup>36</sup> Scottish Bishops may have prepared the Prayer Book but Laud, who had editorial control, and other English bishops subjected it to corrections and approval.<sup>37</sup> Its introduction on 23rd July 1637 produced a furious reaction in many parts of Scotland and the national discontent found expression in the National Covenant.

### 3. The Covenanted Reformation

The signing of the National Covenant at Greyfriars in Edinburgh on 28th February 1638 is one of the most memorable and significant moments in Scotland's history. The covenant heralded a religious and constitutional revolution that had a significant impact on Anglo-Scottish relations. The constitutional settlement saw the curtailment of royal power and prerogative, and the transfer of political power to Parliament. The religious revolution saw the reversal of the policy of James and Charles to anglicise the Scottish Church. Episcopacy was abolished, Presbyterianism re-established and period of intense ecclesiastical reform initiated. Although the union of the crowns had proved detrimental to Presbyterian interests, the Covenanters did not reject it entirely. Union was regarded as a providential blessing that had been abused. In particular, they blamed the king's evil counsellors rather than Charles himself, for dividing the king from his people by imposing popish ceremonies upon the Kirk.<sup>38</sup> To continue in its present form would threaten their reformation. It was necessary that they attempt to redefine the relationship. As Charles was king in three kingdoms, checks and balances on royal power within Scotland alone would be insufficient. In the Bishops' Wars of 1639-40 Charles had attempted to use the might of two of his kingdoms against the third; he might do so again. The

---

<sup>36</sup> Peterkin, *Records of the Kirk of Scotland*, p. 50.

<sup>37</sup> Like Charles, Laud, who was appointed Archbishop of Canterbury in 1633, placed great emphasis upon religious ceremonial, especially in connection with the sacraments. He was appointed to the Scottish Privy Council and his role in Scottish church affairs exceeded that of any of his predecessors. He maintained a regular correspondence with Scottish bishops and encouraged and advocated reform of the kirk, the condition of which had horrified him when he visited Scotland in 1633. Morrill, "A British Patriarchy?", pp. 231-6; Mark Kishlansky, *A Monarchy Transformed, Britain 1603-1714* (Penguin, 1996), pp. 128-33.

<sup>38</sup> *A Remonstrance Concerning the present Troubles*, pp. 2-4. The "evil counsellors" they had in mind were men like Thomas Wentworth, 1st Earl of Strafford, and Archbishop Laud, both of whom were the subjects of *The Charge of the Scottish Commissioners against Canterbury and the Lieutenant of Ireland*, and both of whom were subsequently executed.

Covenanters believed that the changes in Scotland could only be secured by similar changes in England; therefore they insisted on the summoning of the English Parliament and on its participation in treaty negotiations, which took place in London in 1640-1.

It seemed obvious to the Covenanters that protecting their covenanted reformation would require more than the economic and political re-ordering of the relationship between the kingdoms. Thus, while they sought a union that maintained the sovereignty and independence of both kingdoms, they also wanted to develop closer economic, military, and political links.<sup>39</sup> They also believed that any settlement required a confessional element. After all, the National Covenant was primarily a response to the religious policies of the court and they were convinced that their reformation could only be secured and protected from the kind of interference they had experienced for nearly forty years by a similar reformation in England – hence the proposals in 1641 for unity of religion and uniformity of church government. By arguing that this was a divinely appointed opportunity for reformation that should be seized, the Scots tapped into a desire for the reformation of the Church of England that was evident in England and expressed in documents like the *London Petition* of 11th December 1640. The petition, from the city and inhabitants of London, argued that Episcopal government had proved prejudicial to church and state and urged that it be completely abolished along with all laws passed in its favour and that church government according to God’s Word would be established among them.<sup>40</sup>

---

<sup>39</sup> C. L. Hamilton, “The Anglo-Scottish Negotiations of 1640-1”, *Scottish Historical Review*, Vol. 41 (1962), pp. 84-6; W. D. Hamilton (ed.), *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, of the reign of Charles I, 1640-41* (London, 1882), pp. 244-6, 485-6, 513-4. Not only did they seek a confederal relationship with England but they also sought to create a tripartite confederation which would have included the Estates General of the United Provinces. The Committee of Estates gave the Scottish commissioners in London in 1641 an agenda of seven articles that they were to discuss with their English counterparts. They were instructed to familiarise themselves with previous treaties between England and the Low Countries, France and Spain and to ensure that in any confederation Scottish trading and economic interests were protected. See, John R. Young, “The Scottish Parliament in the Seventeenth Century: European Perspectives”, in A. I. Macinnes, T. Riis, F. G. Pederson (eds.), *Ships, Guns and Bibles in the North Sea and Baltic States c.1350-c.1700* (Tuckwell Press, East Linton, 2000), p. 148.

<sup>40</sup> *The First and Large Petition of the Citie of London and Inhabitants thereabouts* (London, 1641). In the preface of their paper, the Covenanters acknowledged the many petitions against prelacy and in favour of reform that had been presented to Parliament “from all parts of this kingdome”.

#### 4. The historiographical debate

Given the circumstances prevailing at the time, the proposals of the Scottish Covenanters seem logical and the motives reasonable, but that is not how they have been interpreted. History has been unkind to the Covenanters who have been accused of setting out to impose and force Presbyterianism upon England: they were guilty, it is said, of promoting a form of Presbyterian imperialism and of embarking upon a holy war in which they were driven by persecuting principles. The Scots are said by one historian to have demanded unity and uniformity in church government, by which they really meant that

episcopacy must be abolished in England and forms of government, worship and theology similar to Scotland's substituted. Partly this demand was the result of missionary zeal and the arrogance instilled by success. Having revolted against the king's attempts to impose England's religion on Scotland, the Covenanters now embarked on the futile policy of trying to reverse the process.<sup>41</sup>

Another historian says that the Scots were on a "mission to presbyterianise England", a mission that "became an obsession . . . and as long as this obsession lasted, harmonious Anglo-Scottish relations were impossible".<sup>42</sup> For a third, the Scots had embarked upon something more than a mission: they "were promoting the extension of the Presbyterian crusade to England with all haste".<sup>43</sup> The use of the term crusade in this context is surely designed to draw comparisons with the medieval crusades in which Christianity was to be advanced by conquest. The major manifestation of this crusading spirit was the Solemn League and Covenant, the main intention of which was the "imposition" of Scottish Presbyterianism on England and

---

<sup>41</sup> David Stevenson, *The Scottish Revolution 1637-44* (Edinburgh, John Donald, 1973), p. 220.

<sup>42</sup> Gordon Donaldson, *Scotland, James V-James VII* (Edinburgh, 1965), p. 332. Similar sentiments were expressed by Hudson: "it must be admitted that, until 1638, the principal drive for unity between the English and Scottish churches came from the southern kingdom. In 1638 however, with the restoration of Presbyterianism in Scotland, the process was reversed and the Scots became vigorous in their effort to Presbyterianize the Church of England," see "The Scottish Effort to Presbyterianise the Church of England", p. 255.

<sup>43</sup> Edward, J. Cowan, "The Solemn League and Covenant", in Roger A. Mason (ed.), *Scotland and England 1286-1815* (Edinburgh, 1987), p. 186.

Ireland.<sup>44</sup> The “Scottish Covenanters” it is argued, understood that by the Solemn League and Covenant, “both they and their English coadjutors were pledged to force Episcopal England to adopt the Presbyterian system of church government as it existed in Scotland”.<sup>45</sup>

The covenanting vision of having the reformed religion in doctrine, worship, and church government established across the three kingdoms has rightly been described as “bold and comprehensive”. It is no less true to suggest that this vision “was predicated upon the Presbyterian version of the Knoxian statement that the Scottish church was the purest and most completely reformed of all Protestant churches and hence the model upon which British uniformity of religion was to be built”. However, from this it has been concluded that the desire for unity and uniformity was “a genuine expression of the Scottish imperial viewpoint”.<sup>46</sup> Presbyterian imperialism, it is claimed, was the dynamic driving the extremists among the Covenanters towards religious unity, whereas for the rest it was a quest for security.<sup>47</sup> “Extremist” in this context probably means those Covenanters who did not go on to become “Engagers”. One Covenanter never regarded by such historians as extreme is James Graham, 1st Marquis of Montrose. According to two editors of his memoirs, “the Solemn League and Covenant was an unprovoked invasion of England on the part of Presbyterian propagandists, seeking by help of a faction in England to impose on that country an alien form of Church

---

<sup>44</sup> John R. Young, “The Scottish Parliament and National Identity from the Union of the Crowns to the Union of the Parliaments, 1603-1707”, in Dauvit Broun, R. J. Finlay and Michael Lynch (eds.), *Image and Identity: the Making and Re-making of Scotland through the Ages* (Edinburgh, John Donald, 1998), p. 110.

<sup>45</sup> Lord Guthrie, “The Solemn League and Covenant of the Three Kingdoms of England, Scotland and Ireland”, *The Scottish Historical Review*, Vol. 15, (1917-18), pp. 297, 301; Barry Coward, *The Stuart Age. England 1603-1714* (London, 1980), p. 213. According to Coward, English contempt for Scots and all things Scottish was not new; it was now reinforced by detestation of Scottish Presbyterianism which the Scots, with missionary zeal, hoped to bring to England. The ecclesiastical supremacy of the Kirk in secular affairs was too reminiscent of Laudianism for most Englishmen of whatever religious persuasion.

<sup>46</sup> Levack, *Formation of the British State*, pp. 110-11.

<sup>47</sup> Michael Lynch, *Scotland: A New History* (London, Pimlico, 1991), p. 273. For other views of Scottish efforts to impose Presbyterianism on England, see David G. Mullan, “‘Uniformity in Religion’: The Solemn League and Covenant (1643) and the Presbyterian Vision”, in W. Fred Graham (ed.), *Later Calvinism, International Perspectives, Sixteenth Century Essays and Studies*, Vol. 22 (Missouri, 1994), p. 250; C. G. Bolam and Jeremy Goring, “English Presbyterian Beginnings”, in C. G. Bolam, Jeremy Goring, H. L. Short, and Roger Thomas (eds.), *The English Presbyterians* (London, 1968), p. 40; Ronald Hutton, *The British Republic 1649-1660* (Macmillan, London, 1990), p. 50.

discipline”.<sup>48</sup> The Presbyterian historian Hector Macpherson expressed similar views:

The formal adoption of persecuting principles by the Covenanters led them into a wrong road. Up till the Solemn League and Covenant they had been fighting largely for religious freedom; now they were determined to use their freedom to take away the freedom of other sects. They resisted all attempts of James and Charles to thrust Episcopacy upon Scotland and now they were engaged in the attempt to thrust Presbyterianism upon England. Success in this objectionable form of holy war was not to be wished for. It is easy to see how the Covenanters fell into the mistake of enforcing their particular form of religion and church government as the absolute truth. Romanism and Prelacy were inimical to civil freedom as well as unscriptural. What more natural than to propose to put down by sheer force whatever did not commend itself to Scripture?<sup>49</sup>

An earlier Presbyterian writer, Alexander Peterkin, was equally damning:

---

<sup>48</sup> Quoted in James King Hewison, *The Covenanters: A History of the Church in Scotland from the Reformation to the Revolution* (2 vols., Glasgow, 1913), Vol. 1, p. 371.

<sup>49</sup> Hector Macpherson, *Scotland's Battles for Spiritual Independence* (Edinburgh, 1905), pp. 96-7. Macpherson was writing in the immediate aftermath of the successful appeal by the Free Church remnant to the House of Lords in 1904. His book was an attack on the “Legal Frees” as he called them and on the Establishment principle. The Free Church remnant had appealed to the House of Lords on the grounds that, by uniting with the United Presbyterian Church which adhered to the Voluntary Principle, the Free Church had departed from the Establishment Principle which was a fundamental principle of its constitution. The union was also a departure from the Confessional standards of the church. As far as Macpherson was concerned, he had set out to discredit historically the judgement of the Lords in regard to the Establishment Principle and had been successful in doing so. Macpherson argued that a study of any era of the Scottish church since the reformation reveals that as far as its great leaders were concerned, “the fundamental principle was not Establishment but Spiritual Independence”. For Macpherson, the two principles were mutually exclusive; it was not possible for them to coexist. Of the Covenanters, he reasoned that “one of the important things inculcated in the Covenant and Confession was the extirpation of Popery and Prelacy. Into the hands of the civil magistrate was put the sword for the purpose of punishing all heretics. In other words, the Westminster Confession sanctions persecuting principles.” Furthermore, the section that so sanctions also sanctions the Establishment Principle. By adopting the Solemn League and the Westminster Confession the Covenanters formally adopted persecuting principles. See *Scotland's Battles*, pp. 93-4, 153-161. Likewise, historian of the civil wars, S. R. Gardiner, wrote, “Of liberty of thought these Scottish Preachers neither knew anything nor cared to know anything. . . . Spiritual and mental freedom would have one day to be learned from England”; quoted in Hewison, *Covenanters*, Vol. 1, p. 371.



The Scots Commissioners and Ministers, in the most indecent manner, exerted themselves to overthrow the Church of England . . . and went the length of presenting to the King a paper, in which they demanded, “unity of religion and uniformity of church government”, in other words, the adoption of the Presbyterian Covenant and the coercive edicts for its adoption; thus violating their duty as negotiators for the affairs of Scotland only, and invading the rights and privileges of an independent nation; fostering the spirit of intolerance and revolution; and propelling the movement in which the Throne and both the Protestant churches were, for many sad years, involved in one common ruin. This intrusion, by the Scotch Covenanters, into the internal affairs of England, and their zealous exertions for the overthrow of its ecclesiastical establishment, and the destruction of Strafford and Laud, is one part of their conduct of which we have never seen any tenable defence, and which, on every sound principle of international law, was altogether unwarrantable and incapable of justification.<sup>50</sup>

It was against such charges that William Hetherington felt impelled to defend the Covenanters. According to Hetherington, “Every person must be aware, that one of the charges most frequently and vehemently urged against the Presbyterian Church of Scotland, is that of its being possessed by such a bigoted and proselytizing spirit as led it to attempt, by undue means, to force its own system upon England during the troubled period of the civil war”.<sup>51</sup>

So, were the Scottish Covenanters nothing more than Presbyterian imperialists ignorant of liberty and toleration, possessed by a bigoted and proselytizing spirit, driven by persecuting principles, who embarked upon an objectionable form of holy war, intent on forcing England to adopt an alien form of church government? The evidence suggests otherwise. While the uniformity sought by the Scots was unquestionably Presbyterian, being convinced of the rightness of their cause and having a strong desire for uniformity of church government is not the same as imposing or attempting to impose it upon England. The Scots themselves made their position perfectly clear when presenting their

---

<sup>50</sup> Peterkin, *Records of the Kirk of Scotland*, p. 292.

<sup>51</sup> William Hetherington, *History of the Westminster Assembly of Divines* (Edinburgh, 1843), p. 375.

proposals and it is important to emphasise that the proposals reflected Scottish “desires”; they were not demands. They believed that unity and uniformity was eminently desirable and achievable “without forcing of consciences”. Furthermore, they regarded it as “no less than usurpation and presumption for one kingdom or church, were it never so mighty and glorious, to give laws and rules of reformation to another free and independent Church and kingdom, were it never so mean”. Having suffered such presumptuous interference in the affairs of their church, the Scots had no intention of turning the tables on England. They were well aware that Presbyterianism could not be imposed on England. That was never their intention. Imagine if the Scots had tried to impose Presbyterianism upon England, the reaction would have been as indignant and furious as the Scottish reaction to the policies of Charles, and rightly so. The Church of Scotland was offered as a model for reform in England, not because it was agreeable to the will of the monarch or the will of the Scots, but because Presbyterian polity was agreeable to the Word of God, and if agreeable to the Word of God then it was agreeable to the will of God. As George Gillespie explained when repeating the view of the Scots held since the Reformation, “The Church of Scotland was blessed with a more glorious and perfect reformation than any of our neighbour churches”.<sup>52</sup> Again, in 1642, the Scottish church was urged as the model for reform on the grounds that

The Confession of Faith and Reformation of the Kirk of Scotland in doctrine, discipline and worship, so far as the Reformers did conceive and understand were regulated by the Word of God, & grounded upon scripture, as is acknowledged by the harmony of Confessions of the Reformed Kirks, and by the testimony of the best and most eminent divines, which have been in the Kirk of England, or in the Reformed Kirks at that time, and to this day.<sup>53</sup>

---

<sup>52</sup> George Gillespie, *An Assertion of the Government of the Church of Scotland* (1641); George Gillespie, *A Dispute against the English Popish Ceremonies*, p. vii; Archibald Johnston, *A Short Relation of the State of the Kirk of Scotland since the Reformation of Religion, to the present time for information, and advertisment to our Brethren in the Kirk of England, By an hearty Wellwisher to both Kingdoms* (Edinburgh, 1638), p. 1.

<sup>53</sup> *Good Newes from the Assembly in Scotland, now sitting in consultation concerning their Ecclesiastical Government in the Church. Exhibited to this Parliament in England, concerning this present Reformation in England, with their heartie desires this ensuing treatise may be forthwith enacted, for the satisfaction of all good subjects here or elsewhere* (London, 1642), p. 1.

## 5. Encouragement from England

The Scots left London in 1641 without any specific commitment from England for uniformity of church government, and for that reason their efforts have been described as a failure.<sup>54</sup> However, their proposals were not rejected outright and, while disappointed, they were not without hope that their proposals would come to fruition. The spirit of reformation evident in England and the strength of the Presbyterian party there encouraged them to believe that Presbyterianism could be established. Of the ministers and politicians with which they had contact in London in 1640, Baillie concluded that, “The farr greatest part are for our discipline”.<sup>55</sup> The Scots left London in 1641 with assurances from Parliament that they shared their desire for “a conformity of Church government” and that reform in England would continue to take place in “due time” and in a manner best conducive to the glory of God and peace of the church and two kingdoms.<sup>56</sup> Further encouragement came in July 1642 in a letter to the Assembly from some English ministers who wrote “That the desire of the most godly and considerable part amongst us, is, that the Presbyterian Government, which hath just and evident Foundation both in the Word of God, and religious reason, may be established amongst us”.<sup>57</sup> The 1642 Assembly also received a letter from the English Parliament containing expressions of intent to carry forward a reformation of the church and of religion, most agreeable to God’s Word and conducive to a firm and stable union between the kingdoms.<sup>58</sup> In response the Assembly maintained that the providential opportunities for reformation must be faithfully improved. No other work of God’s servants could prosper if they neglected this opportunity. The Assembly reiterated the sentiments and proposals of

---

<sup>54</sup> Ogilvie, “Church Union in 1641”, p. 158; David Stevenson, “The Early Covenanters and the Federal Union of Britain”, in R. Mason (ed.), *Scotland and England 1286-1815* (John Donald, Edinburgh, 1987), p. 169.

<sup>55</sup> David Laing (ed.), *The Letters and Journals of Robert Baillie, A. M. Principal of the University of Glasgow MDCXXXVII-MDCLXII* (3 vols., Bannatyne Club, Edinburgh, 1841-2), Vol. 1, p. 287.

<sup>56</sup> J Rushworth, *Historical Collections, – 16th year of King James – 5th year of King Charles* (8 vols., London, 1721-22), Vol. 1, p. 368.

<sup>57</sup> Peterkin, *Records of the Kirk of Scotland*, p. 329. Baillie recorded on 30th July, “A letter from a number of English ministers at London was read, shewing their desire of Presbyterian Government and a full union with our church”. See *Letters and Journals*, Vol. 2, p. 50.

<sup>58</sup> Peterkin, *Records of the Kirk of Scotland*, p. 324.

the commissioners the previous year, reminded the Parliament of its favourable response, and stated its willingness to do whatever it could to secure a common confession, catechism, directory of worship and uniformity of government.<sup>59</sup> A commission was appointed with instructions to pursue all possible avenues to bring about unity and uniformity, and Charles was urged to

consider, that the God of Heaven and Earth is calling for this Reformation at your hands, and that as you are his Vice-gerent, so you may be his prime instrument in it. If it shall please the Lord (which is our desire and hope) that this blessed unitie in Religion and Uniformity in Government shall be brought about; your Majesties Conscience, in performing so great a dutie, shall be a well spring of comfort to yourself, your memory shall be a sweet savour and your name renowned to all following generations.<sup>60</sup>

Again in 1645, Baillie's experiences of London where he was present as a commissioner to the Westminster Assembly led him to the conclusion that "The bodie of the Parliament, City and Country are for Presbyterie, and love us".<sup>61</sup> With a strong Presbyterian party in England and the existence of a strong and widespread movement for reform, including reforming church government along Presbyterian lines, why would the Scots want to interfere? All they needed to do was offer advice, assistance, and encouragement. If anything, they were at pains not to interfere and at one point during negotiations in 1641 they were quick to deny accusations of interfering in specifically English affairs and managed to defuse a potentially damaging situation.<sup>62</sup>

## **6. Providence and the work of Reformation**

The Scottish Covenanters were also encouraged to believe that a thorough reformation could be accomplished across both kingdoms simultaneously by a firm conviction, already referred to above, that both were being providentially called to such a work. They pointed towards the "undeniable evidences of divine providence" that had accompanied

---

<sup>59</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 324-6.

<sup>60</sup> *ibid.*, p. 323.

<sup>61</sup> Baillie, *Letters and Journals*, Vol. 2, p. 320.

<sup>62</sup> See Hudson, "Scottish Effort to Presbyterianize", pp. 271-6.

the cause of the National Covenant in Scotland and had led them onwards to victory.<sup>63</sup> Justifying their invasion of England in 1640 they insisted that

We are called to this expedition by that same divine providence and vocation which hath guided us hitherto in this great business. We see the expediency of it, for the glory of God, for the good of the church, for advancing the gospel, for our own peace; after seeking of God, and begging light and direction from heaven, our hearts are inclined to it, God hath given us zeal and courage to prosecute it . . . encouragements to achieve it from many passages of divine providence, and namely from the proceedings of the last Parliament in England.<sup>64</sup>

Despite their victories in the Bishops' Wars, they never considered using their military superiority to impose religious uniformity, even if Robert Baillie later thought that their cause would be much assisted by the success of the Scots army elsewhere.<sup>65</sup> Indeed, it is reasonable to assume that had the Scots intended to impose a Presbyterian settlement upon England they could have had no better opportunity of doing so than from the position of strength they enjoyed in 1640-1. Yet we find them merely proposing it as something that both nations ought to aspire to in the interests of security, unity, and reformation. Despite the expedition into England, the Covenanters were at pains to point out that it was not an act of aggression but was undertaken reluctantly in the interests of their own defence. It was a question of whether they should stay at home and wait "till our throats be cut, and our Religion, Lawes and Countrey be destroyed; or shall wee bestirred ourselves and seeke our Safeguard, Peace and Liberty in England". They intended their expedition into England to be "for no longer time, then in their Parliament our just grievances and complaints shall be heard and redressed . . . and for enjoying of our religion and liberties in peace, against the invasion of their countrymen".<sup>66</sup> They believed a providential opportunity to improve "rare blessing" of union was now

---

<sup>63</sup> James Kerr, *The Covenants and the Covenanters* (Edinburgh, 1897), p. 154.

<sup>64</sup> *The Lawfulness of Our Expedition into England Manifested* (Edinburgh, 1640).

<sup>65</sup> Baillie, *Letters and Journals*, Vol. 2, p. 111.

<sup>66</sup> *The Intentions of the Army of the Kingdome of Scotland, declared to their Brethren of England, by the Commissioners of the late Parliament, and by the Generall, Noblemen, Barons, and others, officers of the Army* (Edinburgh, 1640), pp. 14-15, 18.

before them.<sup>67</sup> However, there was never any intention or suggestion that their army might remain in England to oversee and secure a suitable reformation in that country. They intended to return to Scotland when a satisfactory peace had been concluded and trusted that one of the consequences of that peace would be a reformation of the church. If the Lord blessed their expedition, “the fruits shall be sweet and the effects comfortable to both nations, to the Posterity and to the Reformed Kirk abroad”. Scotland would be reformed as at the beginning and the reformation in England, long desired by the godly, “shall be according to their wishes and desires, perfected in Doctrine, Worship and Discipline”.<sup>68</sup> Their emphasis here was that the reformation in England would be accomplished according to the wishes and desires of the godly in England. The Scots did indeed have their own wishes and desires for the direction of reformation in England but well understood that it was ultimately a matter for the English. The challenge to the reform-minded in England was, “if he goe before us [both nations] who will not follow, or refuse to put their necks to the Work of the Lord”.<sup>69</sup> Henderson issued the challenge once again when in London in 1641:

The changes, and revolutions which we heare of in other Kingdomes, are documents, that the Divine Providence is about some Great Worke, in which we are now called to act our part . . . the opportunity of Reformation is rare and singular, and cannot be parrallel'd in any History and therefore to be used in all reverence, with heavenly prudence and abstractednesse of spirit, from earthly considerations. We are zealous of our own liberties, let us be more zealous of the liberties of the Kingdome of Christ, that both we ourselves and the Posterity May have a well grounded and blessed peace.<sup>70</sup>

The notion of trying to force Presbyterianism on England was entirely alien to Henderson. His position and reputation was such that his comments on the matter must be regarded as a reflection of those held by the covenanting movement generally. Writing to Robert Baillie

---

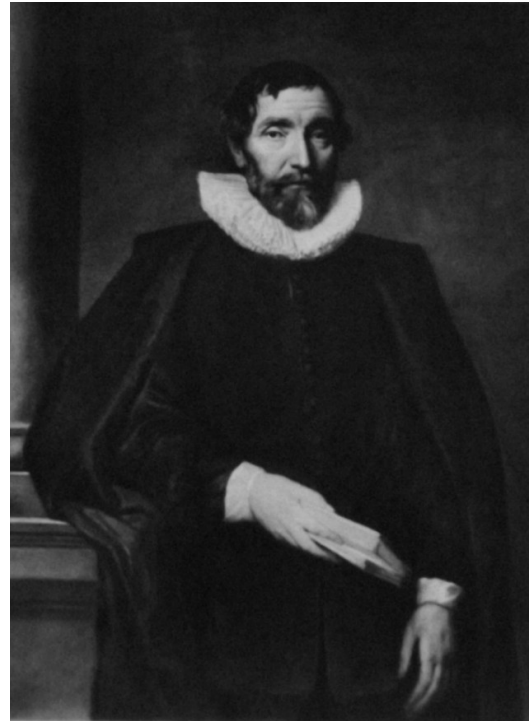
<sup>67</sup> *Our Desires*, p. 383.

<sup>68</sup> Peterkin, *Records of the Kirk of Scotland*, p. 299.

<sup>69</sup> *Intentions of the Army*, p. 18.

<sup>70</sup> *The Unlawfulness and Danger of Limited Prelacie, or Perpetual Precedencie in the Church, Briefly discovered* (1641), p. 19.

in 1642, he said that uniformity “must be brought to passe by common consent, and we are not to conceive that they will embrace our Forme; but a new forme must be sett downe for us all. And in my opinion some men sett apairt sometime for that work”.<sup>71</sup> For Henderson, uniformity could only be achieved by common consent, not by force. His desire for men to be set apart for the work was soon realised in the Westminster Assembly. According to King Hewison, Henderson’s clear statements indicate the tolerant spirit of the trusted leader of the church who was prepared to compromise on non-essentials. Writing retrospectively on the uniformity debates, Baillie also rejected any suggestion that the Scots had tried to impose Presbyterianism upon the English. The Scots, he said,



*Alexander Henderson.*

were never so presumptuous, as to impose anything of theirs upon that Church. It was the Assembly of Divines at Westminster, convocat by the King and Parliament of England, which after long deliberation and much debate, unanimously concluded the Presbyterian discipline. . . . Can here the Scotese be said to compel the English to dance after their pype, when their own Assembly of divines begins the song. . . .<sup>72</sup>

Baillie made a valid and important point. Nevertheless it is evident that the Covenanters were in the vanguard of those seeking reform and uniformity across the kingdoms; indeed, it is questionable if reform would ever have been on the agenda at that time in England had it not been for the Covenanters’ own reformation, their military successes over Charles, their demands that the English Parliament be included in peace negotiations, and their presence in London during those negotiations.

<sup>71</sup> Baillie, *Letters and Journals*, Vol. 2, p. 2.

<sup>72</sup> Robert Baillie, *A review of Doctor Bramble* (Delft, 1649), pp. 4-5.

It is also clear that the Covenanters did not force reform upon a reluctant England but merely provided the opportunity for those seeking reformation in England to pursue it actively, albeit with significant Scottish encouragement. The Scottish ambition for religious uniformity took an important step in 1643 with the signing of the Solemn League and Covenant and the commencement of the work of the Westminster Assembly. Both events offered opportunities for the Scots to participate in the work of reformation in England; opportunities through which the desire for reform in both kingdoms could be accomplished by agreement and consent.

## 7. The Solemn League and Covenant

The Solemn League and Covenant was a significant milestone in the pursuit of union and uniformity. Addressing the House of Commons and the Westminster Assembly in 1643 Alexander Henderson confidently declared that the covenant and the union it represented was the outcome of the special providence of God. He could argue that God was on their side and that divine providence was maintaining and supporting this union because “The Word of God is for it . . . our designs and ways are agreeable to the will of God”.<sup>73</sup> The covenant, which was subscribed across the three kingdoms, was born out of developments in the course of the civil war that were of deep concern to both the Covenanters and the English Parliament. It was the product of Parliament’s desire for Scottish military assistance and the Scots’ need to prevent Charles from emerging victorious and more powerful. Scottish attempts to mediate between king and Parliament had been rejected and they took up arms against their king reluctantly but of necessity.<sup>74</sup>

Of the covenant, Robert Baillie famously noted that “The English were for a civill league, we for a religious covenant”. While this might at first glance give the impression that the two were mutually exclusive, it merely indicates the priorities of either side.<sup>75</sup> While the Scots were primarily interested in a religious covenant, and insisted on one before they would negotiate a military treaty, they were also concerned to secure a military treaty.<sup>76</sup> The English Commissioners came north primarily to

---

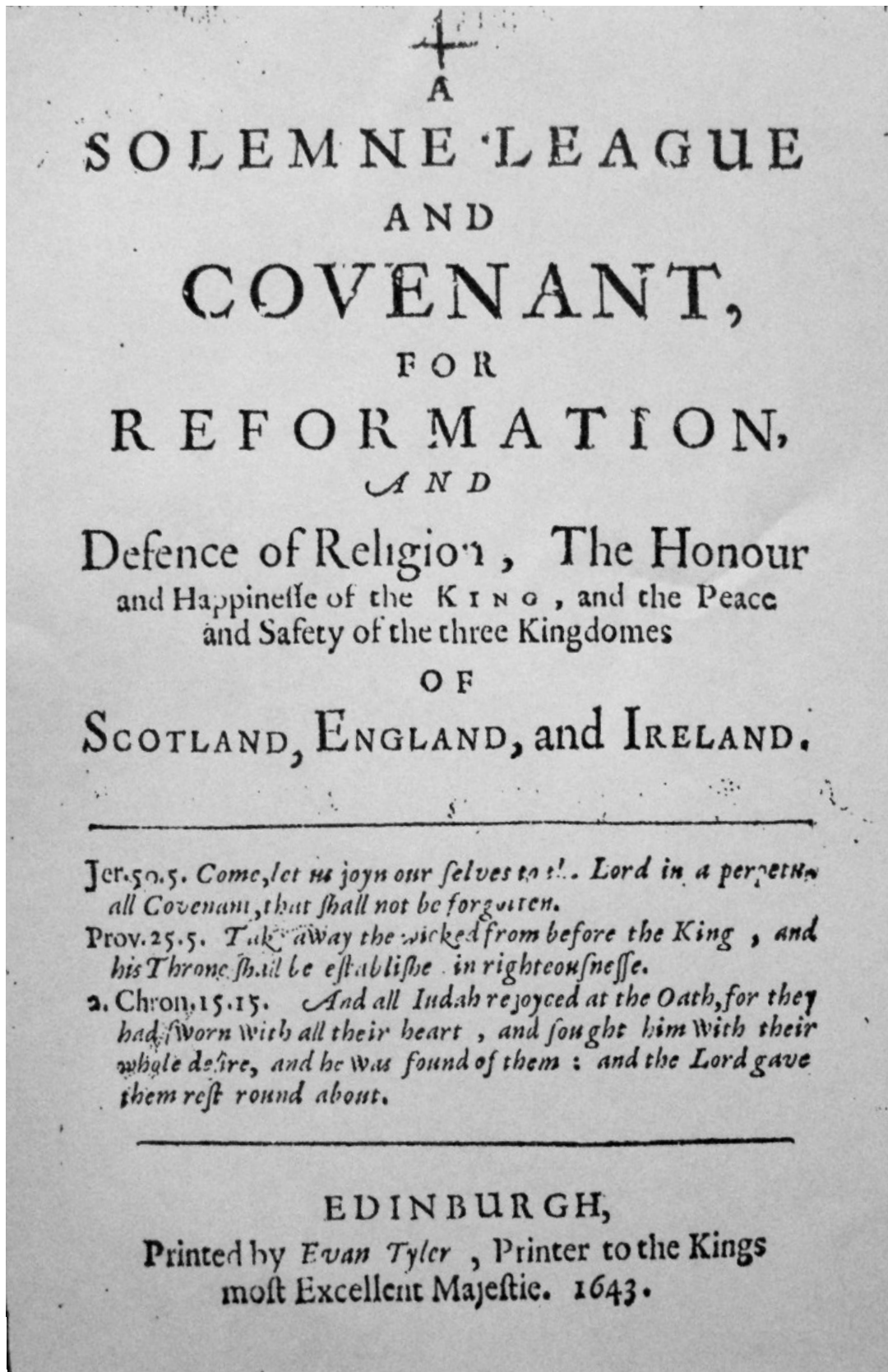
<sup>73</sup> Kerr, *Covenants*, pp. 151-7.

<sup>74</sup> *ibid.*, p. 155.

<sup>75</sup> Baillie, *Letters and Journals*, Vol. 2, p. 90.

<sup>76</sup> Stevenson, “The Early Covenanters”, p. 170.





*The Solemn League and Covenant, printed in Edinburgh in 1643.*

secure military assistance but were under instruction “to make such religious concessions as would be necessary” to secure it.<sup>77</sup> The prevailing view of the covenant as a charter for Presbyterian imperialism stems from the view that the English sought an exclusively civil league but at the insistence of the Scots were obliged to accept one with a religious dimension. Thus, it was not something they wanted but accepted out of military desperation.<sup>78</sup> However, William Row recorded in the biography of Robert Blair that the aims outlined by the English delegation to both the convention and Assembly included, “That both churches, in the two kingdoms, may be brought into a more near union and conjunction, in one form of church government, one directory of worship, one catechism, &c., and the foundation laid of the utter extirpation of popery and prelacy”.<sup>79</sup> The English secured what they sought in both civil and religious terms.

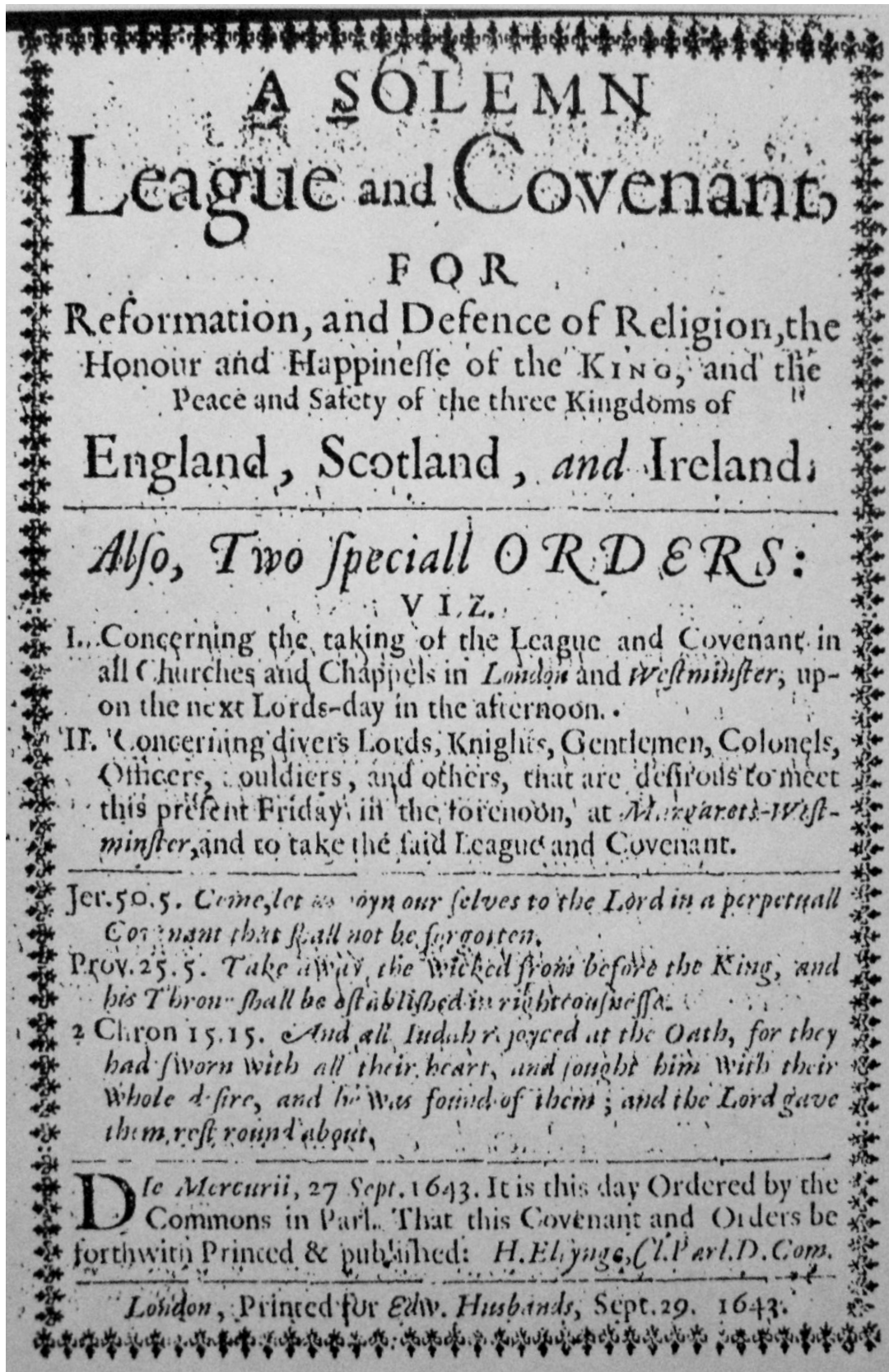
The desires expressed by the English delegation were consistent with the sentiments expressed regarding reformation and uniformity that had been emanating from the English Parliament in 1641 and 1642. They shared with the Scots a genuine desire for reformation and uniformity. Furthermore, the Parliament had already taken steps to establish an Assembly of divines that would among other things promote church unity with Scotland and the continent. The Parliamentary ordinance calling the Assembly described prelacy as “evil”; an impediment to reformation and the growth of religion and very prejudicial to the state and government. It was to be removed and a form of government settled that was most agreeable to God’s Word, liable to secure peace

---

<sup>77</sup> Wallace Notestein, “The Establishment of the Committee of Both Kingdoms”, *American Historical Review*, Vol. 17 (1912), p. 479.

<sup>78</sup> Stevenson, *The Scottish Revolution*, p. 284.

<sup>79</sup> Thomas M’Crie (ed.), *Life of Robert Blair, minister of St Andrews, containing his autobiography, from 1593 to 1636, with supplement to his life, and continuation of the history of the times to 1680, by his son in law, Mr William Row, minister of Ceres* (Wodrow Society, Edinburgh, 1848), p. 171. “The result of the debates and consultations betwixt thir Commissioners and the Committee of Assembly, whereof Mr Blair was one, was the Solemn League and Covenant; and when the draught thereof, at last agreed unto, was read in open audience of the whole Assembly, our smoking desires for a more strict union and uniformity in religion betwixt both the nations, did break forth into a vehement flame; for it was so unanimously and heartily embraced (so sincere was the kirk of Scotland in this grand affair), with such a torrent of most affectionate expressions as none but eye and ear witnesses (whereof the writer was one) can conceive. . . . Mr Blair, among other things, said that when he sometimes pleased himself in his hypothetic reveries, a solemn covenant for reformation of, and uniformity in, religion, in the three kingdoms, was to him *mensura voti* [the height of his wishes].”



*The Solemn League and Covenant, printed in London in 1643.*

and of nearer agreement with the Church of Scotland and other reformed churches abroad. The ordinance was issued on 12th June, nearly two months before the English delegation arrived in Edinburgh to negotiate the covenant, the terminology of which was remarkably similar.

Of the six sections in the Solemn League and Covenant, it was the first that articulated the vision of religious uniformity expressed by the Scots in 1641. Subscribers bound themselves to preserve the reformed religion in the Church of Scotland in doctrine, discipline, worship, and government, and to continue the reformation of religion in England and Ireland in doctrine, discipline, worship and government, according to the Word of God and the example of the best reformed churches. The aim was 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 all our posterity after us, may, as brethren, live in faith and love, and the Lord may delight to live in the midst of us.

Neither the original draft of the covenant nor the final version as amended by the English Parliament gave a specific commitment that the form of church government would be Presbyterian.<sup>80</sup> Instead, like doctrine, discipline, and worship, it was to be reformed, “according to the Word of God and the example of the best reformed churches”. The terms were a compromise born out of the fact that the English wanted to keep a door open for independency in England while the Scots did not. Nevertheless, the Scots were content with the terms, which had been drawn up by Alexander Henderson and Archibald Johnston. Furthermore, the draft amended by the English Parliament was unanimously and “cheerfully” approved and embraced by the General Assembly. Once again, if the Scots were intent on using the covenant to impose Presbytery upon England they had the perfect opportunity to exploit England’s military difficulties by insisting that Presbyterianism be explicitly mentioned in the covenant. Yet it is to their credit that they did not, as Hetherington expressed it:

That the Covenanters did not attempt to force Presbytery upon England, is proved by the fact that they entered into the league

---

<sup>80</sup> Stevenson, *The Scottish Revolution*, pp. 288-9.

without any such specific stipulation, because it was contrary to their principles either to submit to force in matters of religion, or to attempt to use force against other free Christian men . . . they left to England's assembled divines the grave and responsible task of reforming their own church, lending merely, as they were requested, the assistance of some of their own most learned, pious and experienced ministers to promote the great and holy enterprise.<sup>81</sup>

Naturally, the Scots interpreted the covenant's language as leading to the establishment of Presbyterianism across the kingdoms and that was their goal and what they would work so hard to accomplish.<sup>82</sup> As far as they were concerned, Presbyterianism was entirely consistent with the Word of God and there could be no finer example of the best reformed churches than the Church of Scotland.<sup>83</sup> The Scots had every reason to believe that England's commitment to establish church government upon the terms contained in the covenant meant that England would ultimately establish Presbyterianism. Even in England, where both Independents and many Presbyterians did not accept the Scottish interpretation of the covenant, they defended the Scots against accusations that they were trying to impose their system upon the English church.<sup>84</sup>

As we have already seen, the redefinition of the nature of the relationship between the kingdoms was very important to the Scots. Religious unity was just one aspect of their hoped-for confederation that included developing closer economic, military and political links, while – and this is crucial – maintaining the sovereignty and independence of both kingdoms. It was crucial because, as far as the Scots were concerned, their sovereignty and independence had suffered greatly from English interference under James and Charles. Such interference

---

<sup>81</sup> William Hetherington, *History of the Church of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1843), p. 111.

<sup>82</sup> *The Life of Robert Blair*, pp. 171-3; William Ferguson, *Scotland's Relations with England, A Survey to 1707* (John Donald, Edinburgh, 1977), p. 127.

<sup>83</sup> Samuel Rutherford, *The Due Right of Presbyteries or a Peaceable Plea for the government of the Church of Scotland* (London, 1644); *The Divine Right of Church Government and Excommunication* (London, 1646); George Gillespie, *Aaron's Rod Blossoming* (London, 1646); Alexander Henderson, *The Reformation of Church Government in Scotland* (London, 1644).

<sup>84</sup> Ethyn Williams Kirby, "The English Presbyterians in The Westminster Assembly", *Church History*, Vol. 31 (1964), pp. 420-6; J. Kerr, *The Covenants and the Covenanters*, pp. 237-241; Thomas Mocket, *A view of the Solemn League and Covenant* (London, 1644), p. 25; *A Briefe Narration of the Carriage and Success of the English Affaires in the hands of the Commissioners for Scotland* (1643), p. 6.

was unacceptable: “For as we meddle not with the laws of England nor their Parliaments, when there is a difference betwixt the King and them, so ought not the English to meddle with us: For the kingdoms are independent of each other and their government distinct and will not therein be ordered by the other’s example”.<sup>85</sup> Thus it was that in the *Treaty of Peace*, concluded in August 1641 the Scots commissioners were at pains to point out that they were a sovereign independent people who acknowledged no dependence upon the English or made “them Judges to us or our Laws, or any thing that may import the smallest Prejudice to our liberties”.<sup>86</sup>

This was reiterated in the Solemn League and Covenant. The third article of the covenant bound subscribers “mutually to preserve the rights and privileges of the Parliaments, and the liberties of the kingdoms”.<sup>87</sup> The point here is that imposing Presbyterianism upon England was inconsistent with their stated aim of maintaining and preserving the sovereignty, independence, rights, and liberties of both kingdoms. Presbyterian imperialism was in fact a breach of the Solemn League and Covenant.

## 8. The Westminster Assembly

The Westminster Assembly met for the first time on 1st July 1643, having been called by Parliament to reform the liturgy, discipline and government of the Church of England, to clarify and revise the thirty-nine articles, and to promote uniformity with Scotland. The idea of an Assembly of divines dated back to 1641 at the time when the Scots were in London urging uniformity, and in April 1642 a list of potential members was drawn up. The Assembly was something of a triumph for Presbyterianism. It not only produced its famous Confession of Faith and Catechisms but the “Directory for the Publick Worship of God” which was endorsed by the English Parliament in 1645 and the “Form of Presbyteriall Church Government and of Ordination of Ministers”. The membership of the Assembly was largely Presbyterian, of which only a handful were Scots. However, the Presbyterian grouping was not a

---

<sup>85</sup> *Information from the Estaites of the Kingdome of Scotland, to the Kingdome of England* (1640), p. 9.

<sup>86</sup> Rushworth, *Historical Collections*, Vol. 1, p. 364.

<sup>87</sup> Peterkin, *Records of the Kirk of Scotland*, p. 362; *A Briefe Narration of the Carriage and Successes of the English Affaires in the hands of the Commissioners for Scotland*, p. 6.

monolithic body and when the details of church government came under discussion, “a bewildering variety of judgements was revealed”.<sup>88</sup> As one contemporary observed, “The Presbyterians were not of one mind”. Nor were these merely differences between Scots and English Presbyterians or among the English Presbyterians, of which there were many.<sup>89</sup> There were also differences of opinion on matters within the Scots commission who submitted a paper to the Assembly “recommending that governing power rest with the elders of a congregation, rather than with the classical presbyteries, as the Second Book of Discipline had suggested”. David Calderwood’s objection that this view was “a great stepp to Independencie” was sufficient to withdraw from the paper’s position but Rutherford and Gillespie maintained that, while higher courts could deal with issues such as excommunication and ordination, they wanted the congregation to have the power of general oversight.<sup>90</sup> A similar dispute arose at the 1649 General Assembly over the election of ministers. Calderwood was again an advocate for the position of the Second Book of Discipline, namely of election by the Presbytery and a power of veto to the congregation with the reasons for the veto subject to the judgement of the Presbytery. In opposition was Rutherford, who argued for the power of election to be with the congregation and not just the eldership, while the majority favoured Gillespie’s position as outlined in his *Miscellany Questions* “that the direction was the Presbyteries, the election the sessions, and the consent the peoples”.<sup>91</sup>

Not surprisingly, the debates at Westminster on church government were lengthy and at times heated but the heat generated tended to be a consequence of the obstructive tactics employed by the few Independents present who attempted to delay or defeat entirely the aims of the majority Presbyterians. If anything, the Scots found themselves acting as mediators between English Presbyterians and Independents.

---

<sup>88</sup> Benjamin B. Warfield, *The Westminster Assembly and its Work* (Still Waters Revival, 1991 reprint), p. 36. For further studies on the work of the Assembly, see Alexander F. Mitchell, *The Westminster Assembly, Its History and Standards* (Still Waters Revival, 1992 reprint); Hetherington, *History of the Westminster Assembly*; Alexander F. Mitchell and John Struthers, *Minutes of the Sessions of the Westminster Assembly of Divines* (Still Waters Revival, 1991 reprint); George Gillespie, *Notes of Proceedings of the Assembly of Divines at Westminster in Works*, Vol. 2; Chad Van Dixhoorn, *The Minutes and Papers of the Westminster Assembly, 1643-1652* (5 vols., Oxford University Press, 2012).

<sup>89</sup> Kirby, “The English Presbyterians in the Westminster Assembly”, pp. 418-28.

<sup>90</sup> John Coffey, *Politics, Religion and the British Revolutions; The Mind of Samuel Rutherford* (Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 204.

<sup>91</sup> Baillie, *Letters and Journals*, Vol. 3, p. 94.

The Scots policy was “to obtain if possible a settlement not so much imposed by a majority as at least acceptable to all”. In explaining their position Baillie wrote, “We doubt not to carrie all in the Assemblie and Parliament clearlie according to our mind; but if we carrie not the independents with us there will be ground laid for a verie troublesome schism. Alwayes it’s our care to use our outmost endeavour to prevent that dangerous [evil].”<sup>92</sup> The willingness to accommodate was evident in the debate on ruling elders. Once again, Baillie recorded,

Many a verie brave dispute have we had upon them these ten days. I professe my marvelling at the great learning, quickness and eloquence, together with the great courtesie and discretion in speaking, of these men. Sundrie of the ablest are flat against the institution of any such officer by divine right. . . . The most of the synod was in our opinion and reasoned bravelie for it. . . . There was no doubt but we would have carried it by far most voices; yet because the opposites were men verie considerable, above all gracious and learned little Palmer, we agreed upon a committee to satisfie, if it were possible, the dissenters.<sup>93</sup>

It was the great respect they had for their opponents in the debate that obliged the Scots to go to greater lengths to secure an accommodation.

The outcome of the debates was “The Form of Presbyteriall Church Government and of Ordination of Ministers”, the contents of which proved satisfactory to the Scots. On only one point did it fall short of the Scots model; it permitted the office of teacher to administer the sacraments which was contrary to the Second Book of Discipline, a point noted in the act of the General Assembly that approved the document.<sup>94</sup> The point of greatest contention arose over the *jus divinum* of Presbytery. Of this the Scots were convinced but some English divines would only go as far as saying of some elements that they were recommended or permissible. However, the greatest and ultimately insurmountable obstacle to an acceptance of *jus divinum* was the English Parliament and its “ingrained Erastianism”.<sup>95</sup>

<sup>92</sup> *ibid.*, Vol. 2, p. 122; Warfield, *The Westminster Assembly*, p. 36.

<sup>93</sup> Baillie, *Letters and Journals*, Vol. 2, pp. 110-11.

<sup>94</sup> *Acts of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland 1638-1842* (Edinburgh, 1843), p. 121.

<sup>95</sup> *The Reformation of the Church* (Banner of Truth, London, 1965), p. 205.



Accordingly when the “Propositions concerning Church Government” came up to Parliament this was the rock on which it struck. Parliament was very willing to order the churches on the Presbyterian model, but not to erect independent judicatories, founded in a divine right and exercising their functions uncontrolled by Parliament.<sup>96</sup>

Parliament established Presbyterian church government in England in March 1646 but unlike the General Assembly it did not ratify the “Form of Presbyteriall Church Government”. Instead, in 1648 it published its own modified “Form of Church Government to be used in the Church of England and Ireland”. Baillie described the settlement as “a lame Erastian Presbytery” and John Bastwick complained that the English system “upheld the independence of the local congregation and restricted the classical and provincial assemblies to a merely advisory role”.<sup>97</sup> However, despite the strength of the Presbyterian party in Parliament the establishment of Presbyterianism in England was frustrated by the rise to power of the Independents, in particular Cromwell and the New Model Army.<sup>98</sup> The ease with which the fledgling Presbyterian polity was swept away cannot be attributed wholly to the power of Cromwell. Indeed, it could be argued that anyone looking for the use of force to impose a settlement need look no further than the New Model Army. Under Cromwell in the 1650s Scotland was forcibly incorporated into the Commonwealth and thereafter into the Protectorate. The Tender of Union that the Scots were forced to accept legitimised religious pluralism and created a scenario that was the very antithesis of the unity the Covenanters had sought.

It is certainly true that few in England favoured the Scottish model, and their lack of a coherent approach, their disunity, submission to Parliament, and the fact that their fledgling system was precisely that, gave it little chance of surviving Cromwell’s rise to power. As for the Scots, accepting a document as the new constitution for the Church of Scotland which was not entirely consistent with their own Books of Discipline was evidence of “the good faith in which the Scots engaged in

---

<sup>96</sup> Warfield, *The Westminster Assembly*, p. 41.

<sup>97</sup> Bolam and Goring, “English Presbyterian Beginnings”, p. 43; Baillie, *Letters and Journals*, Vol. 2, p. 362.

<sup>98</sup> Coffey, *Politics, Religion and the British Revolutions*, p. 212; Hutton, *The British Republic*, p. 19.

the Westminster assembly debates”.<sup>99</sup> The Assembly’s paper on church government was the outcome of a process of debate and achieved by the common consent Henderson had envisaged. It is entirely unrealistic to assume that a handful of Scots commissioners could somehow impose Presbyterianism upon such an Assembly. The Scots contribution to the debate was crucial and highly influential but never coercive.

Ultimately their desire for uniformity of church government was never realised but it was not for the want of trying. But it is the fact that they tried that has been so misinterpreted. Their proposals and desires have become demands; that they should countenance a Presbyterian uniformity beyond Scotland has become an expression of religious imperialism founded upon persecuting principles; their contribution to the Solemn League and Covenant nothing less than an attempt to impose an alien polity upon unwilling but desperate allies. The interpretation of their motives and actions has been unremittingly negative and undeserved. The Covenanters sought uniformity of church government because such a unity glorified God and it was evident to them that the kingdoms were being providentially called by God to reform the church. Could they, could England, ignore and disobey such a call? It was sought in order to secure their covenanted reformation and protect it from the kind of external interference that the Kirk had been subjected to for forty years. Reformation of the church was not something that should or ought to be restricted by borders. Christian unity on scriptural grounds between Reformed churches was a laudable and biblical aim; it was right in itself, something that all Christians ought to aspire to. Such a unity would strengthen them against their common anti-Christian enemy and perfect the union between the kingdoms, something the reformed in Scotland at least had looked for since the Reformation and had only ever sought to secure through co-operation and consent.

## **9. The Engagement**

It has been the aim of this paper to demonstrate that the Covenanters never sought to impose or force Presbyterianism upon England; that they were never motivated by a spirit of Presbyterian imperialism. Yet the story has an interesting, paradoxical postscript known as the

---

<sup>99</sup> John Coffey, *Politics, Religion and the British Revolutions*, p. 211; Mullan, “Uniformity in Religion”, p. 265.

Engagement.<sup>100</sup> The Engagement was the name given to a treaty negotiated in 1647 between Charles and “moderate” Covenanters led by the Duke of Hamilton. In return for military assistance in the form of an army to take on Cromwell, Charles agreed to confirm the Solemn League and Covenant in Parliament (although none were obliged to subscribe it) and establish Presbyterianism in England for three years. During that time yet another Assembly was to determine a settlement on church government and discipline. The proposed Assembly, which implied a rejection of the work of the Westminster Assembly, involved men appointed by Charles and could only mean a religious compromise that would be unacceptable to mainstream covenanting opinion.<sup>101</sup> Not surprisingly, the General Assembly, its commission, and the majority of the church rejected the Engagement as an unlawful breach of the Solemn League and Covenant. George Gillespie as Moderator of the Assembly in 1648 condemned it as unlawful, sinful, and censurable. It was regarded as a dilution of the fundamental principle of covenanting because it left the taking of the covenant as something arbitrary which was, “contrary to the Acts of the General Assembly and Parliament in this Kingdom, and to one of the chief propositions of Religion once agreed upon by both kingdoms, for a safe and well grounded peace, viz. The proposition concerning his Majesties swearing and signing of the league and covenant and enjoying by Act of Parliament the taking thereof by all the subjects in the three kingdoms.”<sup>102</sup> The Engagement failed to satisfy the church’s desire for the safety and security of religion and was considered to be destructive to it because Charles had also promised to complete the union of the kingdoms according to the intentions of his father; a move described as the “first Scottish instigated effort to promote incorporating union as prescribed by James VI & I”.<sup>103</sup> The two sides of the covenanting movement had different visions of the nature of British union. David Stevenson has argued that the “Engagers remained true to the Covenanters’ belief that a closer union was

---

<sup>100</sup> For a copy of the Engagement see, S. R. Gardiner, *The Constitutional Documents of the Puritan Revolution 1625-1660* (Oxford, 1906), pp. 347-53.

<sup>101</sup> *His Majesties Declaration from Carisbrooke Castle in the Isle of Wight. . . . Together with the Answer and Resolution of the Commissioners of the General Assembly of the Kingdome of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1648).

<sup>102</sup> *ibid*, p. 3.

<sup>103</sup> Allan I. Macinnes, “Politically Reactionary Brits? The Promotion of Anglo-Scottish Union, 1603-1707”, in S. J. Connolly (ed.), *Kingdoms United? Great Britain and Ireland since 1500* (Dublin, 1999), p. 49.

necessary to solve the problems raised by the union of the crowns”.<sup>104</sup> However, while it may be argued that they remained consistent with the aim of seeking to renegotiate the nature of the union to the benefit of Scotland and with the aim of securing the revolution (a point disputed by their opponents), they were not consistent with the original covenanting aim of a confederated confessional union. This, the Engagers effectively rejected and in doing so they took a retrograde step by going back to a union scheme which had been rejected by their Presbyterian forebears forty years previously. To put the Engagement into perspective, it is worth noting that while it was universally condemned by mainstream covenanting opinion, the first Parliament after the restoration of Charles II passed an act in 1661 in favour of the Engagement – the same Parliament that not only abolished all the legislation of the covenanted reformation but laid the foundation for twenty-eight years of dissent and repression. How ironic then, that while historians have mistakenly claimed that the Covenanters, or as some would have it, the extremists among them, were guilty of Presbyterian imperialism, the first-ever attempt to impose Presbyterianism upon England was undertaken as a consequence of the Engagement, by a set of men lauded by historians as moderate Covenanters but described by the General Assembly as “malignants, non-Covenanters, sectaries and enemies to the one righteous cause”.<sup>105</sup>

---

<sup>104</sup> D. Stevenson, *Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Scotland, 1644-1651* (Royal Historical Society, London, 1977), p. 97.

<sup>105</sup> Hewison, *Covenanters*, Vol. 1, p. 446.