

## Lanark Declaration - 1681

### The Act and Apologetic Declaration of the True Presbyterians of the Church of Scotland

Although we ought to take in good part, whatever God in His infinite wisdom hath, for the punishment of our sin, Carved out unto us, and Eye and acknowledge him alone In it; - and though we always ought to acknowledge government and governors as ordained by him, in so far as they rule and govern according to the rules set down by him in his word, and constitutive laws of the nation, and ought to cast the mantle of love on the lesser errors of governors, and give the best countenance to their administration that the nature of their actions will bear; - yet when all these laws, both of God and the kingdom, conditional and constitutive of the government, are cassed and annulled, by pretended laws, and the highest of usurpation, and an inexplicable prerogative in matters ecclesiastic, and arbitrary government in matters civil, is arrogate; - when a banner of impiety, profaneness, and atheism is avowedly displayed against the heavens; a door open of all sorts and sizes, and the remedy thereof still denied by him who should be as a sun and shield to the people, when the parliaments, who ought to be the grand trustees of the kingdom, to whom it belongs in such a case to secure the civil and spiritual interests, are so prelimited by law, as that no true son of the state or church hath liberty to sit and vote there, so that the parliaments, and all places of public trust, and offices of the kingdom from the highest to the lowest, are made up of none but those who are corrupted, overawed, overruled, and bribed: What shall the people do in such an extremity? Should they give their reason as men, their consciences as christians, and resign their liberties, fortunes, religion, and their all to the inexorable obstinacy, incurable wilfulness, and malice of these, who in spite of God and man (and notwithstanding of their many oaths and vows both to God and his people) are resolved to make their own will the absolute and sovereign rule of their actions, and their strained indulgences, and the measure of the subjects hope and happiness? Shall the end of government be lost, through weakness, wickedness, and tyranny of governors? Must the people by an implicit submission and deplorable stupidity, destroy themselves, and betray their posterity, and become objects of reproach to the present generation, and pity and contempt to the future? Have they not in such an extremity, good ground to make use of that natural and radical power they have, to shake off that yoke, which neither we nor our forefathers were able to bear; which accordingly the Lord honoured us (in a general and unprelimited meeting of the estates and shires of Scotland) to do; a convention of unprelimited members, a convention of men who had only the glory of God and the good of the commonwealth before their eyes, - the like whereof the present reigning tyrant could never since his home-coming pretend to? At which convention, he was most legally, and by general consent cast off, by the

Declaration afterwards published at Sanquhar by especial warrant from the said convention. But that we may not seem to have done that, or yet to do the like, upon no grounds, or yet upon few and small grounds, we shall hint at some of the many thousands of the misdemeanours of the now cast off tyrant in his overturning of our church and state.

And First, at his very entry, as if he had attained to Nero's desire, at one blow, in his first parliament, he cut off the neck of that noble constitution of church and state, which our noble and worthy ancestors had made; and not thinking it enough treacherously and falsely to perjure himself, he made such constitutions and laws (if it be not an abuse of language to call them so) as that none but fools of his own feather, and such as would run with himself to the same excess of riot, should have access to the very nearest place or office in the kingdom. And though that in itself is enough, yet not the thousand part of what he hath done.

2. Did he not take to himself a licentious privilege, the exalting of himself unto a sphere exceeding all measures divine and human, tyrannically obtruding his will for a law, both in matters civil and ecclesiastic, making us a laughingstock to the neighbouring nations, who imagined that what he was doing (however tyrannous in itself) to be consonant to our law, blaming the badness of the law instead of the badness of the governors, whereas nothing could be less consonant to the tenor and end of our, and all other laws, divine and human. For we have reason to praise the Lord, who eminently assisted our ancestors in framing of our laws, so that we may (upon good ground) say, that there is no nation in civilibus hath better, and in ecclesiasticis so good laws as we; having (by God's providence) attained unto a more excellent and strict reformation than any nation. The observing of which laws, was the very constitutive and absolute condition whereupon he was admitted to the Royal office, and without which he was not to have the exercise of his power, and to which he was most solemnly and deeply sworn oftener than once, with his hands lifted up to the most High God; He himself declaring the subjects tie no longer to remain or continue, than the ends and constitutions of these covenants were pursued and preserved by him. All which are (contrary to his engagement foresaid) by his pretended (and as aforesaid constitute) parliaments cassed and annulled, and the laws no more made the rule, but his own will in his letters: So that we are made the reproach of the nations, who say we have only the law of letters, instead of the letter of the law.

3. Hath it not been his constant method to adjourn and dissolve parliaments at his pleasure, when they (though his own creatures) were so sensible of his misdemeanours, that they began to question, and when questioned by them, ye may easily conjecture what they were.

4. Hath he not seated himself as supreme head over all persons, in all causes civil and ecclesiastic? and by virtue of that arrogantly arrogated

power, fabricate a chimeric government, or rather pageantry in the church, with such ludicrous eminences, pompous power and pride, through the vanity of men's depraved imaginations, the grievous and mysterious abuse, from whence have issued all the calamities, all the languishing sorrows, and confounding shames and reproaches, which in this day of blackness and darkness, have invaded, involved, polluted and pestered the church and kingdom. And thus hath he approven himself to be the Defender of the Faith! under which the godly party, true sons of the church and nation, have been groaning these twenty years bygone, and in great numbers murdered and slain in the fields, led as lambs to the slaughter upon scaffolds, imprisoned and kept in irons, and with exquisite tortures tormented, exiled, banished, and sold as slaves amongst savages: all which they endured most patiently a long time, or ever they offered to appear in public in arms against him. And all this they have met with as a reward (just upon the Lord's part, though unjust and ungrate as to his part) for their too great and inordinate love wherewith they prevented him in the day of his distress; being the first and only beginning of his unhappy restorations.

5. Time will fail us to narrate, what taxings, cessings, and every way impoverishing of the subjects, and grinding of the faces of the poor, dilapidating the pendicles, rights, and revenues of the crown, for no other end, but to employ them for keeping up a brothel, rather than a court, since there is no court in the world hath attained unto such a height of debauchery and depravedness, as that court by his example hath done. For *Regis ad exemplum totus componitur orbis*.

6. And lastly, as if it had not been enough to exercise such a tyrannical and arbitrary power himself, he, by a late parliament such as the former, intends that his cruelty and tyranny should not die with himself, but that he shall in his time install such an one (if not worse) as himself, contrary to all law, reason and religion, and in that parliament to unhinge very protestantism itself, by framing a test, such as no protestant (how corrupt soever) can take, and so ridiculous that it is made the laughingstock even of enemies themselves.

Is it then any wonder, considering such dealings and many thousands more, that true Scotsmen (though we have been always and even to extremity sometimes loyal to our kings) should after twenty years tyranny break out at last, as we have done, and put in practice that power, which God and nature hath given us, and we have reserved to ourselves, as our engagements with our princes having been always conditional, as other kingdoms are implicitly, but ours explicitly?

Let none therefore object against the legality of what we have done, or are doing: for we offer as (how inconsiderable we are said to be) to prove ourselves to have done nothing against our ancient laws civil or ecclesiastic, against any lawyers or divines whatsoever, our ancient laws

being judges; and we having safety to pass and repass (if the public faith after so many breaches can be trusted) for that effect. So then let no foreign kingdoms or churches through misinformation or false copies (as they are many) of what we act or do, because we have no access to the press as they; we say let them not take up a wrong opinion of us or our proceedings: for we are only endeavouring to extricate ourselves from under a tyrannous yoke, and to reduce our church and state to what they were in the years 1648 and 1649.

We therefore, have convened, in our name and authority, ratify and approve what hath been done by the Rutherglen and Sanquhar declarations. And do by these present rescind, annul, and make void, whatsoever hath been done by Charles Stuart or his accomplices in prejudice to our ancient laws and liberties, in all the several pretended and prelimited parliaments and conventions, since the year 1660. And particularly, the late parliament holden at Edinburgh the 28th July 1681, by a commissioner professedly popish, and for villany exiled his native land, with all the acts and laws there statute and enacted: as that abominable, ridiculous, unparalleled, and soul perjuring test and the rest.

We therefore command and charge you, to pass to the Mercat cross of Lanerk, and in our name and authority, publish this our act and declaration, as ye will be answerable.

Given on 15th December, 1681.