

SANQUHAR DECLARATION

Richard Cameron (c. 1648–1680)

Richard Cameron, a Scottish Presbyterian, graduated from Saint Andrew's University and became a school teacher in Falkland (Fife). He began attending conventicles, and in 1678 became a field preacher. He consistently refused to accept an episcopal structure for the Church of Scotland, which itself three times cautioned him for his radicalism. He emigrated to the Netherlands in early 1679, but returned to Scotland the following year to lead armed resistance to the government of Charles II. On 22 June, Cameron and twenty of his followers rode into the town square of Sanquhar (Dumfries) and issued the following declaration.

Sanquhar, 22 June 1680

We under-subscribers, for ourselves and all that join with us and adhere to us, being put to it by God, our consciences, and men, do bind our souls with a solemn and sacred bond, lest on the one hand we should be carried with the stream of the apostacy and defection of the Church in this time, and on the other hand lest we should (not being so engaged) evanish in vanity and be without a right rule in good designs. We judged it our duty again to covenant with God and one another, and to publish this declaration to the world of our purposes, that men may know our most inward thoughts, the rules that we walk by, and the outmost ends that we have before our eyes for this intent, that these who are lovers of God, zealous of His reigning in glory, and desirous of reformation and the propagation of His kingdom may have occasion no more to be jealous of our intentions, and others may have no ground to load us with odious and foul aspersions, but that all knowing the truth of us, if they shall strive against us and truth with us, shall do it without excuse and against conviction; and that these who shall join with us may do it upon solid and undoubted grounds, and both they and we may expect grace from Him faithfully to persevere, and happily to be successful in so good purposes.

It is true, we are not ignorant of the great unmindfulness, failing, counter-acting, and mocking that has been in our former vows and covenants with God, and of the great judgments that have and are like to follow such impious and sinful dealing with God in such weighty matters (for which we both ought and desire to be humbled before Him), which cannot but make us with great trembling of heart enter into new ones, knowing both our own weakness and readiness to relapse, and the great hazard and danger of such relapses. Yet, the desire of recovering and preserving a remnant, and the conviction of this as the most convenient means, the zeal to God's glory and Christ's reigning (which is the highest and most acceptable duty man can perform to God), hoping for His mercies (Who is witness to the integrity of our hearts and the rightness of our intentions), that He will instruct, direct, accept, and prosper us, we go forward declaring that nothing else but what we here express is our Design.

1. We covenant and swear that we take the only true and living God—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—to be our God, and betake ourselves to the merits and righteousness of His Son as the alone righteousness that can justify us before God. And that we take His Scriptures and Word to be the object of our faith and rule of our conversation in all things. And that we shall give up ourselves to Him to be renewed, instructed, and in all things ruled by His Spirit, according to that Word. And shall earnestly endeavour, by His grace, to render to Him that love, worship, and obedience that His Word requires, and His goodness engages us to.
2. That we shall to the outmost of our power advance the kingdom of our Christ established throughout the land (if at any time hereafter God shall give us this opportunity), righteousness, and the true reformed religion, in the truth of its doctrine, in the purity and power of its worship and ordinances, and in its discipline and government, and free the Church of God from the thralldom, tyranny, encroachment, and corruption of prelacy on the one hand, and Erastianism on the other. And that we shall to our power relieve the Church and subjects of this Kingdom (we being called thereto by His giving of us power, power being God's call to do good) of that oppression that has been exercised upon their consciences, civil rights,

and liberties, that men may serve Him holily, without fear, and possess their civil rights in quietness, without disturbance.

3. That we shall endeavour to our utmost the extirpation of the Kingdom of Darkness, and whatsoever is contrary to the Kingdom of Christ, and especially idolatry and Popery in all the articles of it, as we are bound in our national Covenant, and superstition, will-worship, and prelacy, with its hierarchy, as we are bound in our Solemn League and Covenant. And that we shall with the same sincerity, endeavour (God giving us assistance) the overthrow of that power that has established that prelacy and Erastianism over the Church, and exercises such a lustful and arbitrary tyranny over the subjects, seeking again to introduce idolatry and superstition in these lands, contrary to our covenants. And, in a word, that we shall endeavour the extirpation of all the works of Darkness and the relicts of idolatry and superstition (which are both much enlarged and revived in our times), and execute righteous judgment impartially (according to the Word of God and degree of wickedness) upon the committers of these things, but especially blasphemy, idolatry, atheism, sorcery, perjury, uncleanness, profanation of the Lord's day, oppression, and malignancy, that being thus zealous for God, He may delight to dwell among us.
4. Seriously considering that the hand of our kings has been against the throne of the Lord, and that now for a long time the succession of our kings, and the most part of our rulers with him, have been against the purity and power of religion and godliness and freedom of the Church of God, and has degenerated from the virtue and good government of their predecessors into tyranny, and have of late so manifestly rejected God, His service, and reformation as a slavery, as they themselves call it in their public papers (especially, in these last letters to the King and Duke of Lauderdale), disclaiming their covenant with God and blasphemously enacting it to be burnt by the hand of a hangman, governed contrary to all right laws, divine and human, exercised such tyranny and arbitrary government, oppressed men in their consciences and civil rights, used free subjects (Christian and reasonable men) with less discretion and justice than their beasts.

And so not only frustrate the great end of government (which is that men may live godly, holily, and peaceably under them, and might be maintained in their rights and liberties from injury and wrong) but have also walked contrary to it, so that it can no more be called a governments but a lustful rage, exercised with as little right reason, and with more cruelty than in beasts, and they themselves can be no more called governors, but public grassators and public judgments, which all men ought as earnestly to labour to be free of as of sword, famine, or pestilence raging amongst us.

And besides, have stopped (instead of punishing) the course of law and justice against idolaters, blasphemers, atheists, murderers, incestuous, and adulterous, and other malefactors. And instead of rewarding the good, have made butcheries and murders on the Lord's people, sold them as slaves, imprisoned, defaulted, banished, and fined them upon no other account but for maintaining the Lord's right to rule consciences against the usurpations of men, for fulfilling their vows, and repelling unjust violence, which innocent Nature allows to all. Of all which, and more particulars, we can give (we speak as before God) innumerable and sure instances.

Neither can it be thought that there is hope of their returning from these courses, having so often showed their natures and enmities against God and all righteousness, and so often declared and renewed their purposes and promises of persevering in these courses....

5. We then being made free by God and their own doings, He giving the law and they giving the transgression of that law, which is the cause that we are loosed now from all obligations, both divine and civil to them, and knowing that no society of men that has corruption in them (which always is ready to beget disorders and do injuries, unless restrained and punished by laws and government) can be without laws and government, and withal, desiring to be governed in the best way that is least liable to inconveniencies and tyranny, we do declare that we shall set up over ourselves, and over all that God shall

give us, power, government, and governors according to the Word of God, and especially according to Exodus 18:21¹...

6. It being the work of the ministers of the Gospel to preach, propagate, and defend the Kingdom of God, and to preserve the doctrine, worship, discipline, government, liberties, and priviledges of the same from all corruptions and encroachments of rulers and all others. And seeing that the ministers of the Church of Scotland (at least the greatest part of them) before not only were defective in preaching and testifying against the acts of these rulers for overthrowing religion and reformation, abjuring our covenant made with God, establishing a government in the Church, which that King calls his own government (and so not God's), contrary to our covenant...

We declare, which is proper for us to do, that we neither can nor will hear preaching, nor receive sacraments from these ministers that have accepted of and voted for that liberty; and declare all who have encouraged and strengthened their hands, by hearing and pleading for them, all those who have trafficked for an union with them without their renouncing and repenting of these things, all those that do not testify faithfully against them, and after do not deport themselves suitably to their testimonies, and all who join not in public with their brethren who are testifying against them; we declare that we shall not hear them preach nor receive sacraments from them, at least till they stand in judgment before these ministers and be judged by them who have followed the Lord and kept themselves free of these defections. And as our hearts have cleaved to these ministers while they were on the Lord's side and subjected ourselves to them, so we shall still cleave to those that abide following Him and shall be subject to them in the Lord.

7. Then we do declare and acknowledge that a Gospel ministry is a standing ordinance of God, appointed by Christ to continue in the Church until the end of the world. And that none of us shall take upon him the preaching of the Word or administering the sacraments unless called and ordained thereto by the ministers of the Gospel. And as we declare that we are for a standing Gospel ministry, rightly chosen and rightly ordained, so we declare that we shall go about this work in time to come with more fasting and praying, and more careful inspection into the conversation and holiness of these men that shall be chosen and ordained; the want of which formerly has been a great sin, both in ministers and people, which has not been the least cause of this defection.

A True and Exact Copy of a Treasonable and Bloody Paper Called the Fanatick's New Covenant (1680)

¹ Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. (Exodus 18:21, KJV)