

P257 Copy of the National Covenant of Scotland

RECORDS' IDENTITY STATEMENT

Reference number: GB1741/P257

Alternative reference number:

Title: Copy of the National Covenant of Scotland

Dates of creation: n.d.

Level of description: Fonds

Extent: 1 volume

Format: Paper

RECORDS' CONTEXT

Name of creators:

Administrative history: In 1637, King Charles I and Archbishop Laud tried to bring the separate churches of England and Scotland closer together by the introduction of a new Book of Canons to replace John Knox's Book of Discipline as the authority for the organisation of the Kirk and also by the introduction of a modified form of the Book of Common Prayer into Scotland. There were no consultations, either in the Scottish Parliament or in an Assembly of the Kirk, and the proposals met with outrage from Scots anxious to preserve their national and religious identity. A movement against the Laudian reforms gained momentum across Scotland headed by Presbyterian noblemen and radical clergymen.

During the following months, the protest grew into a campaign of petitions and supplications denouncing the Laudian prayer book and criticising the power of the bishops. Led by the lords Loudoun, Rothes, Balmerino and Lindsay, the supplicants organised four elected "Tables" or committees to represent the nobility, gentry, burgesses and clergy, and a fifth Table to act as an executive body. The clergyman Alexander Henderson and the lawyer Archibald Johnston of Wariston were given the task

of drawing up a National Covenant to unite the supplicants and to clarify their aims. Based upon the Confession of Faith signed by James VI in 1581, the Covenant called for adherence to doctrines already enshrined by Acts of Parliament and for a rejection of untried "innovations" in religion. Although it emphasised Scotland's loyalty to the King, the Covenant also implied that any moves towards Catholicism would not be tolerated.

In February 1638, at a ceremony in Greyfriars Kirk in Edinburgh, large numbers of Scottish noblemen, gentry, clergy and burgesses signed the Covenant, committing themselves under God to preserving the purity of the Kirk. Copies were distributed throughout Scotland for signing on a wave of popular support. Those who hesitated were often intimidated into signing and clergymen who opposed it were deposed. By the end of May 1638, the only areas of Scotland where the Covenant had not been widely accepted were the remote western highlands and the counties of Aberdeen and Banff, where resistance to it was led by the Royalist Marquis of Huntly.

The Covenanter movement became the dominant political and religious force in Scotland following the Glasgow Assembly of 1638. The clash between the King and the Covenanters culminated in the Bishops' Wars of 1639 and 1640. In 1643, during the English Civil War, the objectives of the Covenant were incorporated into the Solemn League and Covenant which secured a military alliance between the English Parliament and the Scottish Covenanters against the Royalists. This alliance was instrumental in bringing about the defeat of the King's cause in the First Civil War.

<http://www.british-civil-wars.co.uk/glossary/scots-national-covenant.htm>

Custodial history:

RECORDS' CONTENT

Description: Linen facsimile copy of the 1638 National Covenant of Scotland

Appraisal:

Accruals:

RECORDS' CONDITION OF ACCESS AND USE

Access: open

Closed until:

Access conditions:

Copying: Copying permitted within standard Copyright Act parameters

Finding aids: Available in Archive searchroom

ALLIED MATERIALS

Related material:

Publication:

Notes:

Date of catalogue: November 2011

Ref.	Description	Dates
P257/1	Bound Volume entitled <i>Facsimile of the National Covenant of Scotland</i> , with a linen facsimile copy of the 1638 National Covenant for Scotland [1 volume]	n.d.