

The Lanark Declaration, 15 December 1681.

The Lanark Declaration was drafted at the first general convention of the United Societies at Logan House in Lesmahagow parish, Lanarkshire. Surprisingly, its author or authors, effectively the founding fathers of the United Societies, are not identified by any Societies' source.

Text from *An Informatory Vindication*, 176-85.

'The Act and Apologetical Declaration of the True Presbyterians of the Church of Scotland, published at Lanark January 12. 1682.

Although we ought to take in good part, whatever God in His Infinite wisdom [176] hath, for the Punishment of our sins, carved out unto us, and Eye and acknowledge him alone in it; And though we always ought to acknowledge Government and Governours 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, & ought to cast the mantle of Love on the lesser errors of Governours, & give the best Countenance to their Administration, that Nature of the Actions will bear. Yet when all these Laws, both of God and the Kingdom, conditional and constitutive of the Government, are cased and annulled, by pretended Laws, and the highest Usurpation, and the inexplicable prerogative in matters Ecclesiastick, and arbitrarie Government in matters Civil, is arrogat; when the banner of impietie, profaneness, and Atheism is avowedly displayed against he heavens, a door opened to abominations of all sorts and sizes, and the remedie thereof still denied by him who should be as a sun and a shield to 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 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 publick trust and [177] Offices of the Kingdom, from the highest to the lowest, are made up of none but these 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, incureable 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 absolute and sovereign Rule of their Actions, and their strained Indulgences the measure of the Subjects hope and happiness? Shall the end of Government be lost, through weakness, wickedness, and Tyrannie of Governours? Must the people, by an implicate submission and deplorable Stupiditie, destroy themselves, and betray their posterity, and become objects of reproach to the present Generation, and pitie 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 Yoak, 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* [178] *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 *Sanquhair*, 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 Falsly 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 ryot, should have access to the very meanest place or Office in the Kingdom: And though than in it self 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 [179] exceeding all measures Divine and Humane, Tyrannically obtruding his will for a Law, both in matters Civil and Ecclesiastick, making us a Laughing stock to the Neighbouring Nations, who Imagined that what he was doing (however Tyrannous in it self) to be consonant to our law, blaming the badness of the Law instead of the Badness of the Governours, whereas nothing could be less Consonant to the Tenor and end of our, and all other Laws, Divine and Humane. 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 Gods great Providence) attained unto a more excellent and strict Reformation, then 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 oftner than once, with his hands lifted up to the most High God; *he himself Declaring the Subjects tye 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 Engagements foresaid,) by his pretended (and as a [180] foresaid 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, in stead 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 to sensible of his Misdemanners, that they began to Question, and when Questioned by them, ye

may easily Conjecture what they were.

4. Hath he not seated himself supream head over all Persons, in all Causes Civil and Ecclesiastick? And by vertue of that arrogantly arrogated power; fabricate a Chimerick Government, or rather Pageantry in the Church, with such Ludibrious eminencies, pompious power and pride, through the vanity of mens depraved imaginations, the grievous and Mysterious abyse, 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 [181] Years bygone, and in great numbers Murthered and slain in the fields, led as lambs to the slaughter upon the 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 the publick in Arms against him. And all this they have met with as a reward (just upon the Lords 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 Restauration.

5. Time will fail us to narrate, what exorbitant 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 imploy 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 Debaucherie 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 exerce such a tyrannical and arbitrarie power himself, he, by a late Parliament such as the [182] 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, contrar to all Law, Reason, and Religion, And in that Parliament to unhinge very Protestantisme it self, by framing a *test*, such as no Protestant (how corrupt soever) can take: And so ridiculous, that it is made the laughing stock even of enemies themselves.

Is it then any wonder, considering such dealings and many thousands more, that true *Scotsmen* (though we have always and even to extremity some times Loyal to our Kings) should after twenty Years tyrannie 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 our selves. As our Engagement with the 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 our selves to have done nothing against our Ancient Laws Civil or ecclesiastick, against any Lawyers or Divines whatsoever, our Ancient laws being Judges; and we having safety to pass and repass (if the publick Faith after so many breaches can be trusted) for that effect. So then let no Foreign Kingdoms or Churches [183] through

misinformations 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 not only endeavouring to extricate our selves from under a Tyrannous Yoke, and to reduce our Church and State, to what they were, in the Years 1648 and 1649.

We therefore, here convened, *In our Name and Authority*, Ratifie and Approve what hath been done by the *Rutberghen* and *Sanquhair* Declarations. And do by thir presents, *Rescind, annull and make void*, whatsoever hath been done by *Charles Stewart* 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 at -----

The 15 *December* 1681, [184]

Let King Jesus Reign, and all His Enemies be Scattered. [185]