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The Scottish Universities and Opposition to the National Covenant, 1638

ABSTRACT

This study examines the initial opposition to the National Covenant from the masters of the universities of St Andrews, Glasgow and Aberdeen in 1638. It has generally been assumed that opposition to the Covenant among the intellectual elite was confined to the Aberdeen Doctors. The resistance in universities, however, was much more extensive. Only Edinburgh University, located in Scotland's revolutionary centre, supported the covenanting movement from the outset. In elucidating the widespread nature of opposition in universities, this article draws on a corpus of previously overlooked manuscript and printed sources, especially pertaining to the covenanters' debates with intransigent faculties at St Andrews and Glasgow, before setting the Aberdeen Doctors' resistance within the context of this wider academic hostility to the covenanting movement over the course of 1638. Though the universities' resistance was by no means coordinated, it, nevertheless, represented a pressing concern as the covenanters pursued a national movement. In examining these early intellectual arguments against the Covenant, this article illuminates university masters' stark differences with the covenanters over the nature of kingly authority, church government and religious ceremony. Because the universities trained Scotland's ministry and magistracy, these intellectual disagreements had pressing consequences. Thus, far from a minor

encumbrance to the covenanting movement in 1638 that resulted in the subscriptions of the masters of Glasgow and St Andrews and the purge of the Aberdeen Doctors, the universities' resistance to the Covenant proved foundational to the covenanters' subsequent aggressive supervision of higher education within the construction of their fledgling confessional state in the 1640s.

In early March 1638 commissioners arrived in St Andrews to collect subscriptions to the National Covenant. The Covenant, launched a week earlier, renewed the anti-catholic Negative Confession of 1581, enumerated parliamentary statutes protecting true religion and concluded with a bond between all subscribers and God to uphold true religion and the king's majesty.[1] It marked the culmination of months of disputes between Charles I and his Scottish subjects who opposed the new Prayer Book, the institution of which in July 1637 had prompted the riots that precipitated the Scottish revolution. The commission dispatched to St Andrews, which was led by the leading covenanting minister, Alexander Henderson, was one of four commissions sent by the Tables, the covenanters' provisional government in Edinburgh, to press subscription to the Covenant in Scotland's universities.[2] Upon arrival at St Andrews the commissioners found none of the enthusiasm that had marked the Covenant's promulgation in Edinburgh. The masters of St Andrews viewed them as 'pretended commissioners' sent by a 'pretendit convention', with no legal authority to impose the Covenant, an illegal oath and band, on the university. 'We, as his

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[1] For the Covenant, see Gordon Donaldson (ed.), *Scottish Historical Documents* (Glasgow, 1999), 194–201.

[2] John Leslie, earl of Rothes, *A Relation of Proceedings Concerning the Affairs of the Kirk of Scotland, from August 1637 to July 1638*, Bannatyne Club (Edinburgh, 1830), 82.

majestie's free subjects and leidges', they declared, 'have most just cause and excuse of refusal to take ane oath from thes urgers and exacters, unlesse we wold willingly quyt our libertie, and render ourselves and leidges to others we know no who'.[3] St Andrews refused to subscribe to the Covenant. In Glasgow and Aberdeen commissioners confronted similar opposition among each university's faculty. In their campaign to foster a national movement in 1638, the covenanters were faced with an immediate problem: university masters refused to comply.

This article examines the initial opposition to the covenanting movement made by the universities between the Covenant's introduction in February 1638 and the opening of the general assembly at Glasgow the following November. For opponents of Charles's liturgy, it was essential that the universities, the nurseries of the ministry, remain uncorrupted by this purported religious innovation, and the Tables warned the universities against adopting the Prayer Book in December 1637, 'lest parents should be forced to remove their children'.[4] The commissions of March 1638 were an extension of this sentiment, to ensure that these seminaries remained free of 'corrupt doctrine' and supported the covenanting movement. The near-total opposition of Scotland's professoriate, however, sparked a wider debate with the covenanters over the nature of political and religious orthodoxy in Scotland. It has generally been assumed that opposition to the Covenant among Scotland's intellectual elite was confined to the Aberdeen Doctors, the

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[3] C. J. Lyon, *History of St Andrews, Episcopal, Monastic, Academic, and Civil*, 2 vols (Edinburgh, 1843), ii. 372–3.

[4] *The Letters and Journals of Robert Baillie*, ed. David Laing, 3 vols, Bannatyne Club (Edinburgh, 1841–2) [*LJB*], i. 26–7.

small yet vocal faction of academics at King's and Marischal colleges.[5] Their resistance was supposedly symptomatic of north-east Scotland's traditional conservatism.[6] But, as the present study intends to illuminate, opposition among Scotland's universities was more widespread than that of the famous if ultimately futile resistance levelled from Aberdeen.

Even before the covenanters' commission travelled to Aberdeen in July 1638 to engage the Aberdeen Doctors, it had confronted resistance from the masters of Glasgow and St Andrews. The universities do not lack narrative institutional histories but these works offer only

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[5] The Aberdeen Doctors, their opposition to the Covenant and the nature of their theology and philosophy have long been sources of scholarly intrigue. See, for instance, Donald MacMillan, *The Aberdeen Doctors* (London, 1909); J. D. Ogilvie, 'The Aberdeen Doctors and the National Covenant', *Papers of the Edinburgh Bibliographical Society* 11 (1912) 73–86; G. D. Henderson, 'The Aberdeen Doctors', in *idem*, *The Burning Bush: Studies in Scottish church history* (Edinburgh, 1957), 75–93; David Stewart, 'The "Aberdeen Doctors" and the covenanters', *Records of the Scottish Church History Society* 22 (1986) 35–44; A. C. Denlinger, '"Men of Gallio's Naughty Faith?": The Aberdeen Doctors on reformed and Lutheran concord', *Church History and Religious Culture* 92 (2012) 57–83; S. J. Reid, 'Reformed scholasticism, proto-empiricism and the intellectual "Long Reformation" in Scotland: the philosophy of the "Aberdeen Doctors", *c.* 1619–*c.* 1641', in John McCallum (ed.), *Scotland's Long Reformation: New perspectives on Scottish religion, c. 1500–c. 1660* (Leiden, 2016), 149–78.

[6] On Scotland's 'conservative north', see Gordon Donaldson, *Scottish Church History* (Edinburgh, 1985), 191–203. For a recent reassessment of this notion in light of the National Covenant, see Barry Robertson, 'The covenanting north of Scotland, 1638–1647', *Innes Review* 61 (2010) 24–51.

rudimentary sketches of this opposition.[7] Only Edinburgh University, which was located in the epicentre of the movement and whose principal, John Adamson, was a fervent covenanter who fanned the flames of revolution, proved supportive from the outset.[8] In his history of the university, Thomas Craufurd, a regent and mathematics professor, wrote that the 'maisters of the Colledge of Edinburgh were very forward' in subscribing. The Edinburgh town council dealt swiftly with two regents, Robert Rankin and John Broun, who refused subscription, deposing and replacing them by October 1638.[9] Edinburgh's conformity, however, and the quickness with

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[7] On opposition in St Andrews, see R. G. Cant, *The University of St. Andrews: A short history*, 2nd edn (Edinburgh, 1970), 66–7; and on that in Glasgow, James Coutts, *A History of the University of Glasgow From Its Foundation in 1451 to 1908* (Glasgow, 1909), 98–9; J. D. Mackie, *The University of Glasgow, 1541–1951: A short history* (Glasgow, 1954), 98–9. On opposition in Aberdeen's, see J. M. Bulloch, *A History of the University of Aberdeen, 1495–1895* (London, 1895), 109–11; R. S. Rait, *The Universities of Aberdeen: A history* (Aberdeen, 1895), 140–1. For a notable exception, see David Stevenson, *King's College, Aberdeen, 1560–1641: From protestant reformation to covenanting revolution* (Aberdeen, 1990), 94–123.

[8] On Adamson's preaching in support of the Covenant, see *LJB*, i. 52–4.

[9] Thomas Craufurd, *History of the University of Edinburgh, from 1580 to 1646* (Edinburgh, 1808), 132–3; *Extracts from the Records of the Burgh of Edinburgh, 1626 to 1641*, ed. Marguerite Wood, Scottish Burgh Records Soc. (Edinburgh, 1936), 207–10.

which local authorities quieted refractory masters, were exceptional in the context of general opposition to the Covenant in the universities in 1638.[10]

The main purpose of this article is to clarify the nature of the universities' opposition and the ways in which the covenanters met their resistance. Studies of the Scottish revolution have only referenced such opposition insofar as it concerned the Aberdeen Doctors, for which there is a ready corpus of published material on their debates with the covenanters.[11] Beyond these works, there exists a body of hitherto overlooked printed and manuscript sources that highlight the debates that unfolded between St Andrews, Glasgow and the covenanters throughout 1638. These include the reasons against the Covenant of March 1638 drawn up by masters in St Andrews, the first university academics to oppose openly the movement and the covenanters' subsequent responses. It also includes the defence of the King's Covenant of September 1638, articulated by Glasgow's Principal, John Strang, which provides insight into Strang's doubts concerning the National Covenant. This material evinces the existence of much broader domestic intellectual disaffection for the Covenant in the universities, where opponents expressed

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[10] Edinburgh operated according to the interests of the town council, which had founded the university in 1583. See Michael Lynch, 'The origins of Edinburgh's "Toun College": a revision article', *Innes Review* 33 (1982) 3–14.

[11] See, for example, J. K. Hewison, *The Covenanters: A history of the church in Scotland from the reformation to the revolution*, 2 vols (Glasgow, 1908), i. 275–8; David Stevenson, *The Scottish Revolution, 1637–1644: The triumph of the covenanters* (Newton Abbot, 1973), 101–2; A. I. Macinnes, *Charles I and the Making of the Covenanting Movement, 1625–1641* (Edinburgh, 1991), 185; L. A. M. Stewart, *Rethinking the Scottish Revolution: Covenanted Scotland, 1637–1651* (Oxford, 2016), 141–3.

grievances at the heart of which lay stark differences over the nature of kingly authority, church government and religious ceremony. The image that emerges is one of extensive, if *ad hoc*, opposition to the Covenant among Scotland's professoriate. There is little to suggest that their resistance was unified, though similar arguments were posed in each university. The covenanters thus proceeded against each university in turn, convincing or coercing masters to subscribe as each case required.

This study also seeks to stress the broader implications of the universities' opposition to the Covenant and amend scholarly conclusions that this ephemeral 'academic hostility' was little more than an 'interesting sideshow'.[12] Specifically, it aims to tie the impact of this opposition to the covenanters' subsequent policies towards the universities in the 1640s. New scholarship on the Scottish revolution has argued persuasively that in the 1640s the covenanters constructed a confessional state, however fleeting, in Scotland.[13] It is essential to understand the universities' place in that process. Recent work on the covenanters' curricular reforms in the 1640s has provided a crucial first step in assessing the covenanters' relationship with the universities.[14] This further revises the notion that the covenanters oversaw a period of intellectual stagnation

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[12] For such conclusions, see Hewison, *The Covenanters*, i. 275; Stewart, 'Aberdeen Doctors', 43.

[13] On covenanted Scotland as a confessional state, see Stewart, *Rethinking the Scottish Revolution*, 1–26.

[14] S. J. Reid, '"Ane Uniformitie in Doctrine and Good Order": the Scottish universities in the age of the Covenant, 1638–1649', *History of Universities* 29/2 (2016) 13–41. I am grateful to Dr Reid for sharing with me an earlier draft of this article.

but it does not account for the origins of such aggressive university policies.[15] The construction of confessional states necessitated the training of elites in universities, which inculcated correct knowledge, doctrine and discipline in scholars who would go on to constitute governing authorities and endow states with a localised confessional identity.[16] Because the universities educated Scotland's ministry, their opposition, and thus their perceived unorthodoxy, hardened

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[15] See G. D. Henderson, *Religious Life in Seventeenth-Century Scotland* (London, 1937), 117–39; Hugh Trevor-Roper, 'Scotland and the puritan revolution', in *idem*, *Religion, the Reformation and Social Change* (London, 1967), 392–411. For studies of the universities that consider their 'attachment' to Aristotelian scholasticism, see C. M. Shepherd, 'Philosophy and science in the arts curriculum of the Scottish universities in the 17th century', unpublished Ph.D. thesis (University of Edinburgh, 1974); *eadem*, 'Newtonianism in Scottish universities in the seventeenth century', in R. H. Campbell and A. S. Skinner (eds), *The Origins and Nature of the Scottish Enlightenment* (Edinburgh, 1982), 65–85. These conclusions have also been challenged of late in Giovanni Gellera, 'The reception of Descartes in the seventeenth-century Scottish universities: metaphysics and natural philosophy (1650–1680)', *Journal of Scottish Philosophy* 13 (2015) 179–201; Alasdair Raffe, 'Intellectual change before the enlightenment: Scotland, the Netherlands and the reception of Cartesian thought, 1650–1700', *SHR* 94 (2015) 24–47.

[16] Walter Rüegg, 'Themes', in Hilde de Ridder-Symoens (ed.), *A History of the University in Europe. Volume II: Universities in early modern Europe (1500–1800)* (Cambridge, 1996), 24, and in the same volume, Willem Frijhoff, 'Patterns', 53–5, 64–5; and P. A. Vandermeersch, 'Teachers,' 217–8; Helga Robinson-Hammerstein, 'The "common good" and the university in the age of confessional conflict', in Ciaran Brady and J. H. Ohlmeyer (eds), *British Interventions in Early Modern Ireland* (Cambridge, 2005), 73–96.

covenanter policies for them following the Glasgow general assembly of 1638. The covenanters thereafter created new governing committees and manipulated existing organs of the church and state to serve their interests.[17] This process included the universities, where their policies involved the purging of antithetical professors, which paralleled the deposition of ministers who opposed the Covenant;[18] the commissioning of annual visitations that evaluated competency and orthodoxy among professors and students;[19] and the developing of a uniform curriculum that echoed the scheme first envisaged in the *First Book of Discipline*.[20] As will be suggested

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[17] This involved the creation and renovation of a number of institutions, both secular and ecclesiastical. See especially Stewart, *Rethinking the Scottish Revolution*, 171–7, 214–17, 236–7, and also Stevenson, *Scottish Revolution*, 299–304; 'The general assembly and the commission of the kirk, 1638–1651', *Records of the Scottish Church History Society* 19 (1975) 59–79; Walter Makey, *The Church of the Covenant 1637–1651: Revolution and social change in Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1979), 59–84; David Stevenson (ed.), *The Government of Scotland under the Covenanters, 1637–1651* (Edinburgh, 1982), pp. ix–li.

[18] Reid, '"Ane Uniformitie"', 16–23; David Stevenson, 'Deposition of ministers in the church of Scotland under the covenanters, 1638–1651', *Church History* 44 (1975) 321–35.

[19] See *Records of the Kirk of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1843), ed. Alexander Peterkin, 187, 208, 262–3, 279, 297, 327, 345, 360–1, 407, 432–3, 453, 482, 519, 555–7.

[20] On the covenanters' curriculum scheme, see Reid, '"Ane Uniformitie"', 33–7; C. M. Shepherd, 'A national system of university education in seventeenth-century Scotland?', in J. J. Carter and D. J. Withrington (eds), *Scottish Universities: Distinctiveness and diversity* (Edinburgh, 1992), 26–33. On the protestant reformers' schemes for higher education, see *The*

throughout this study, the covenanters' confrontations with disaffected university professors over the course of 1638 conditioned these subsequent policies towards the universities.

The study which follows begins by examining the opposition of St Andrews, which produced the first corporate response to the covenant. It next considers Glasgow and the protracted affair of convincing its principal, John Strang, to subscribe. It concludes with the resistance of the Aberdeen Doctors, whose opposition was by no means unique, but whom the covenanters were, nevertheless, unable to win over. This structure is intended to highlight the nature of each university's opposition while providing a chronological framework for the debates as they occurred. It is also meant to emphasise that while each institution's masters made comparable arguments at similar times, their resistance was not coordinated, though it nonetheless constituted a significant matter for the covenanters to address in 1638.

St Andrews

In the early seventeenth century James VI and I had moulded St Andrews into Scotland's ecclesiastical centre, complete with an enterprising archbishop and a university modelled on Oxford.[21] Among James's anglicising ecclesiastical reforms, which included the contentious Five Articles of Perth, was his removal from the universities of the presbyterian faction led by the

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First Book of Discipline: with introduction and commentary, ed. J. K. Cameron (Edinburgh, 1972), 58–62, 129–52.

[21] On James and Oxford, see Kenneth Fincham, 'Oxford and the early Stuart polity', in Nicholas Tyacke (ed.), *The History of the University of Oxford. Vol. IV: Seventeenth-century Oxford* (Oxford, 1997), 179–98.

reformer Andrew Melville.[22] In his efforts to transform St Andrews into a Scottish Oxford, James revoked the Melvillian 'New Foundation', a streamlined protestant constitution for the university, in favour of a return to the university's medieval foundation.[23] James also reintroduced the degree of doctor of divinity, which became a prerequisite for ascending the ranks of the episcopate to the office of the bishop.[24] Finally, in 1623 he ordered the use of an English liturgy in the chapel at St Mary's College, St Andrews, which had transformed under Melville's principalship into Scotland's chief protestant seminary; Charles I issued a similar order in 1633.[25] Amidst this wave of activity, in 1607 James replaced Melville with Robert Howie, a moderate advocate of episcopacy, who was at the college's helm in 1637.[26] Howie's

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[22] A. R. MacDonald, 'James VI and I, the church of Scotland, and British ecclesiastical convergence', *Historical Journal* 48 (2005) 885–903. On James VI and I, Andrew Melville and the Scottish universities, see S. J. Reid, *Humanism and Calvinism: Andrew Melville and the universities of Scotland, 1560–1625* (Aldershot, 2011).

[23] *The Records of the Parliaments of Scotland to 1707*, ed. K. M. Brown *et al.* (St Andrews, 2007–16) [*RPS*], 1621/6/117 (accessed 25 Jan. 2016).

[24] *Original Letters Relating to the Ecclesiastical Affairs of Scotland*, ed. Beriah Botfield and David Laing, 2 vols, Bannatyne Club (Edinburgh, 1851), ii. 805–9.

[25] David Calderwood, *The History of the Kirk of Scotland*, ed. David Laing and Thomas Thomson, 7 vols, Woodrow Soc. (Edinburgh, 1842–5), vii. 569. For Charles's orders, see St Andrews University Library, Special Collections [StAUL], UYSS 110/C/4.23. See now also Leonie James, '*This Great Firebrand': William Laud and Scotland, 1617–1645* (Woodbridge, 2017), 65–7.

[26] Reid, *Humanism and Calvinism*, 236.

episcopal and liturgical inclinations led the earl of Rothes to claim that St Mary's 'obedience' to the English liturgy was 'given by that fearfull man Doctor Howie, who hath fallen back from the trewth of his first professione'. Rothes identified Howie as an agent of the Prayer Book, writing that he corrupted the 'mynds of the people' by 'poynts of divinitie taught in the schools for infecting the youth'.[27] Rothes was conflating the liturgy of 1623 with the Prayer Book of 1637 but his ire spoke to a pressing reality: Scotland's chief seminary had already been accustomed to the use of English liturgy and a pronounced level of royal interference.

Given this pedigree, it is perhaps unsurprising that on 20 March 1638, in ten reasons issued for refusing the Covenant, the St Andrews masters denounced the Covenant as politically illegal and religiously innovatory.[28] They argued that the Tables had received no royal sanction to meet, which was expressly forbidden 'under the paine of treason' by parliament in 1581.[29] Political bands, the crux of the Covenant, had also been outlawed by parliament in 1585. By virtue of pursuing such a band, the masters contended, the covenanters were committing sedition. The masters found no faults in the Negative Confession of 1581, however, which was reproduced verbatim in the Covenant. The Negative Confession also consisted of a band but this band was

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[27] Rothes, *Relation*, 2, 4–5.

[28] The date appears on the original manuscript. See Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland [NLS], Wod. Fol. XLIII, fos 273–4. For copies, see NLS, Wod. Qu. XXV, fos 32–3; NLS, Wod. Qu. CVI, pp. 155–8; Lyon, *St Andrews*, ii. 372–6.

[29] Lyon, *St Andrews*, ii. 373; *RPS*, 1581/10/32 (accessed 22 Feb. 2016).

legal because it had been mandated by king and council.[30] The Covenant, by contrast, was 'destitute' of any such authority, thus rendering the Negative Confession, in this iteration, obsolete.[31] The masters argued that the Covenant, instead, imposed 'many aditions and novelties' on the Negative Confession, which had already renounced popery with the legal backing of king, council and parliament. The Covenant set the Negative Confession in a context that ignored deliberately the legal parameters of the kirk's ceremony and polity, which had then been enjoined by successive general assemblies, culminating in the Five Articles of Perth. The St Andrews masters noted that the Covenant abjured 'the government and authoritie by archbishops and bishops, [and] the articles concluded in the Generall Assembly at Aberdeen, St Andrews, and Perth'.[32] In other words, episcopacy and the Five Articles, which with the Prayer Book comprised the covenanters' main bugbears, were to be removed in an illegal fashion: an innovation contrary to the laws of the kingdom. What the covenanters were advocating was a tyranny 'yet found in the archbishops and bishops, (whom they doe so odiouslie traduce,) neither in any free kirke or kingdome'. It was clear to St Andrews' masters that no subject could be made to sign this unlawful document.

Beyond these grievances, masters in St Andrews were also troubled by the manner in which the covenanters interpreted unilaterally the Negative Confession and expounded the Covenant, doing so without the advice of the 'rulers of the church' or 'the ancient

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[30] See D. G. Mullan, *Episcopacy in Scotland: The history of an idea, 1560–1638* (Edinburgh, 1986), 156–7, 178–9; A. R. MacDonald, *The Jacobean Kirk, 1567–1625: Sovereignty, polity, and liturgy* (Aldershot, 1998), 20–1.

[31] Lyon, *St Andrews*, ii. 373; *RPS*, 1585/12/15 (accessed 22 Feb. 2016).

[32] Lyon, *St Andrews*, ii. 374.

Universities'.[33] They viewed the universities as essential for the cultivation of the nation's doctrinal orthodoxy. What is more, this highlights further the tension that had developed between competing conceptions of orthodoxy. In the minds of the St Andrews masters, had they or any other of the universities been consulted in the making of the Covenant, the document would have taken on a moderate tone. It is likely that it would never have been drafted in the first place. Orthodoxy for the St Andrews masters was based on what they viewed as the legal definitions of the kirk, which included the Five Articles and episcopacy. The masters were noticeably quiet on the Prayer Book, which perhaps suggests an underlying distaste for the liturgy of 1637; indeed, aversion to the Prayer Book did not necessarily mean support for the Covenant. Nevertheless, the ten reasons against the Covenant were more focused on attacking discrepancies in the Covenant than defending Charles's religious policies.

Alexander Henderson arrived in St Andrews with the Tables' commission towards the end of March. A leading covenanter, Henderson had been instrumental in planning the resistance to the Prayer Book and had drafted the National Covenant alongside Archibald Johnston of Wariston. He was also a St Andrews alumnus and former regent.[34] Upon arrival in St Andrews, Henderson is reputed to have converted many townspeople to the cause through his preaching.[35] He offered a passionate defence of the Covenant for his audience: it was an uncorrupted

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[33] *Ibid.*

[34] John Coffey, 'Henderson, Alexander (*c.* 1583–1646)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004) [*ODNB*] [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/12900; accessed 15 Jan. 2016].

[35] *Sermons, Prayers, and Pulpit Addresses by Alexander Henderson, 1638*, ed. R. T. Martin (Edinburgh, 1867), 1; Stevenson, *Scottish Revolution*, 91.

reproduction of the Negative Confession, which was merely affixed with an interpretation. It also included a mutual bond for the defence of true religion, which was not averse to royal authority. On this last point, Henderson opined that, 'this is very reasonable to be done, albeit not asked of; for when your neighbour's house is burning, ye will not run to the king to [ask] if ye should help him or not, before it come to your own'.[36] Henderson's defence of the Covenant seemed to have done the trick: on 5 April Robert Baillie wrote to his cousin, William Spang, that, 'St Andrews, we hear, for the most part, hes subscryved'.[37]

Henderson's explicit dealing with his *alma mater* is less clear. His mission was successful in the sense that by 1 November Baillie could report in another letter that, save for the St Mary's divinity professor Patrick Panter, who was later deposed by the general assembly, 'the rest of St Andrewes Doctors, Howie, Bruce, Martine, Baron, hes all subscryved'.[38] This constituted the core of the St Andrews hierarchy: Howie was principal of St Mary's; Andrew Bruce was principal of St Leonard's; George Martine provost of St Salvator's; and John Baron was the dean of faculty.[39] The masters who had launched one of the first salvos against the covenanters had been brought over to the cause but there has been little reference to the process by which they were convinced, save for its relative quickness.[40] The university also operated in a

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[36] *Sermons, Prayers, and Pulpit Addresses*, 2, 21–30.

[37] *LJB*, i. 64.

[38] *Ibid.*, i. 98.

[39] Hew Scott, *Fasti Ecclesiæ Scoticanæ: The succession of ministers in the church of Scotland from the reformation*, 7 vols (Edinburgh, 1915–28), vii. 411–3, 418, 428.

[40] Cant, *St Andrews*, 66.

region that generally supported the Covenant, unlike Aberdeen.[41] Given his mission to St Andrews, Henderson probably addressed the university in the form of an unpublished tract.[42] This work sheds light on how a leading covenanter first confronted university opposition and affords a way to better understand the covenanters' subsequent confrontations with Glasgow and Aberdeen.

For Henderson, the arguments which he confronted in St Andrews were unbecoming of academics, whose opposition reflected 'some close papist or a gross temporizer or a dunse doctor'. He lamented the quality of the written dissent: 'Generally these reasounes are not grounded upon any expresse text of Scripture, not upon any warrant taken from Scripture, nor upon the practise of this kirk, bot only upon humane authoritie of civil imagines ill applied'.[43] Henderson expected a more erudite response from his *alma mater*, with arguments grounded in scriptural exegesis befitting of Scotland's principal university. He next went on to address each of the ten reasons advanced in St Andrews for rejecting the Covenant. His defence of the covenanting movement encapsulated an opposing interpretation of Scottish parliamentary and ecclesiastical history. Whereas the academics had identified parliamentary precedent for

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[41] Peter Donald, *An Uncounselled King: Charles I and the Scottish troubles, 1637–1641* (Cambridge, 1990), 97.

[42] Edinburgh, NLS, Wod. Qu. XXVI, fos 128–34. One biography (John Aiton, *The Life and Times of Alexander Henderson* (Edinburgh, 1836), 262) makes passing reference to this document. The presbyterian historian and minister David Calderwood also penned a brief reply to St Andrews, in which he stressed the Covenant's legality. See NLS, Wod. Qu. LXXVI, fos 56–7.

[43] NLS, Wod. Qu. XXVI, fo 129r.

deeming the Covenant illegal—the 1585 statute against bands—Henderson countered that this act 'strictes only against conventions and covenants that ar against God or the king, the kirke or state'.[44] The Covenant, which bound subscribers to God and each other to uphold the king and kirk, did not fall under this stricture.[45] On the contrary, the covenanters acted out of charity and piety in urging 'their neighboures to constancie in true religion' in promoting the Covenant, which, Henderson somewhat ironically noted, contained no requirement to subscribe, nor penalty for refusing.[46] But, as stated expressly by parliament in 1581, all Scots were obliged to take the Negative Confession. Therefore, as Henderson noted, all should subscribe to the Covenant, for it represented an assurance to maintain all parliamentary and general assembly acts 'in all tyme coming'.[47] The covenanting movement represented a continuation of, and not a deviation from, the Negative Confession.

Henderson also sought to dispel the notion that the covenanters acted tyrannically. Shouts of tyranny had been directed at the covenanters for coercing subscription and for openly disparaging episcopacy and the Five Articles. Henderson noted that the covenanters opposed the articles of the general assemblies of 1615–18. They intended to try bishops precisely because they represented the true usurpation of the foundations of the kirk, which were defined in the *Second Book of Discipline* and the general assemblies of the last two decades of the sixteenth

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[44] See above, n. 31.

[45] NLS, Wod. Qu. XXVI, fo 129v.

[46] *Ibid.*, fo 129r. Of course, coercion would soon become a feature of the covenanters' subscription campaigns. See D. G. Mullan, *Scottish Puritanism, 1590–1638* (Oxford, 2000), 290–1.

[47] NLS, Wod. Qu. XXVI, fos 129r, 130r. See *RPS*, 1581/10/20 (accessed 29 Jan. 2016).

century, prior to the reinstatement of episcopacy.[48] Henderson quoted directly from the *Second Book*, which established the kirk's presbyterian polity:

> Now he is blind who can not see the office of bishopes as it is termed and used in this kingdome to be condemned by the book of discipline: as is manifest by these wordes in ch. 2, ther ar four ordinarie functiones or offices in the kirk of God, the office of the pastour, minister or bishope, the doctor, the presbytir or eldar and the deacon; this offices ar ordinarie and ought to continew perpetually in the kirk as necessarie for the governement and policie therof, and no mor offices ought to be receind or sufferd in this kirk of God established according to his word.[49]

Here, 'bishop' did not represent an office in an episcopal hierarchy but was, instead, synonymous with a minister: one who discharges the word of God. Thus, what the covenanters advocated was not novel, nor contrary to the laws of the kingdom. Eliminating prelacy and the Five Articles were markedly orthodox given this interpretation of the *Second Book of Discipline*, the Negative Confession and corresponding legislation. What represented innovation, and thus tyranny, was the entire scope of Charles's religious reforms, which Henderson construed as disobedient to the 'spirituall mother' of the kirk.[50] The king had failed to abide by the maxim,

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[48] A. R. MacDonald, 'James VI and the general assembly, 1586–1618', in Julian Goodare and Michael Lynch (eds), *The Reign of James VI* (East Linton, 2000), 170–85. On the Second Book of Discipline, see *The Second Book of Discipline: With introduction and commentary*, ed. James Kirk (Edinburgh, 1980), *passim*, and on its drafting, 42–57.

[49] NLS, Wod. Qu. XXVI, fo. 131r. This represented a traditional Calvinist reading of ecclesiastical offices. See Kirk (ed.), *Second Book of Discipline*, 74–100, 176–7.

[50] NLS, Wod. Qu. XXVI, fo. 131r.

'one does not have God the father who does not have the mother church', and in this sense had not been an exemplary *Filius Ecclesiæ*.[51] If the Scots were obliged to defend 'true religion', this meant correcting the ills brought upon the mother kirk with or without the king. As such, the covenanters were called to 'compel their household by the strongest bondes they can, even of oath, to adhere unto God and his religion'.[52]

Henderson's answers were significant for several reasons. First, his description of the king as *Filius Ecclesiæ* suggests the integration into his rebuttal of the 'two kingdoms theory' prevalent in presbyterian circles. It held that Christ was sovereign of the church and the monarch of the temporal state, a stark dichotomy in which the temporal ruler could not lay claim over the spiritual realm; he was but a 'son' of the church.[53] Second, in citing the *Second Book of Discipline*, Henderson sought to state the true nature of the kirk's presbyterian polity by detailing its offices and elucidating the meaning of the term 'bishop', which was taken in the Calvinist, presbyterian sense. Third, by highlighting the kirk's presbyterian polity and the dichotomy between the spiritual and temporal estates, Henderson also revealed the significant role of

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[51] *Ibid.*, fo. 129r. Henderson quoted St Cyprian's dictum, '*non habevit Deum Patreum, qui non habet Ecclesiam matrem*'. See *St Cyprian of Carthage: Select treatises on the church* (New York, 2006), ed. Brent Allen, 157.

[52] NLS, Wod. Qu. XXVI, fo. 129v.

[53] Andrew Melville was the chief exponent of this theory. See James Melville, *The Autobiography and Diary of Mr. James Melville, with a Continuation of the Diary*, ed. Robert Pitcairn, Wodrow Soc. (Edinburgh, 1842), 370. On Melville and the two kingdoms theory, see S. J. Reid, 'Andrew Melville and the law of kingship', in R. A. Mason and S. J. Reid (eds), *Andrew Melville (1545–1622): Writings, reception, and reputation* (Aldershot, 2014), 47–74.

another office, the doctor. The doctor was the professor of divinity, whose inclusion in the *Second Book of Discipline* represented a renewed emphasis on the office.[54] If the minister was the messenger of God's word, the doctor had the vital task of interpreting it: 'to oppine up the mynd of the Spirit of God within the Scripturis … sound doctrene be teachit and the puritie of the Gospell not corruptid throw ignorance and evill opinionis'.[55] The divinity professor was closely integrated into the kirk's fabric, acting as an elder and sitting in presbyteries and synods; it was one of the central offices of Scotland's spiritual realm.

At St Andrews the divinity professor, or doctor, served as the university's principal. St Mary's principal, Robert Howie, was also a doctor but in another sense. In July 1616 Howie, his colleagues from St Leonard's and St Salvator's and John Strang, future principal of Glasgow, were granted doctorates of divinity.[56] James VI and I had reintroduced this degree in his attempts to bring St Andrews into closer synergy with the English universities. In a letter delivered to St Andrews in July 1616, James made clear his desire 'that the same ceremonies and rites be used in the creatioune of Doctours whiche are used in the Universities of Cambridge, [and] Oxenforde'.[57] The conferral of these degrees in July 1616 presaged the reintroduction of the doctorate, which since the reformation had not been awarded in Scotland because of its

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[54] *Second Book of Discipline*, 84–8; Reid, *Humanism and Calvinism*, ch. 2.

[55] *Second Book of Discipline*, 187–90.

[56] H. M. B. Reid, *The Divinity Principals in the University of Glasgow, 1545–1654* (Glasgow, 1917), 257–9.

[57] For James's letter and corresponding articles for university reform, see *Original Letters Relating to the Ecclesiastical Affairs*, ii. 805–9. For an overview of these reforms, see Reid, *Humanism and Calvinism*, 246–9.

association with the degrees of the catholic church.[58] Under James, however, the degree became a necessary credential for ascending the ranks of the Scottish episcopate, with the Scottish primate overseeing the conferral of degrees.[59] In June 1637 Howie wrote to his counterpart at Edinburgh, John Adamson, of the refusal to take on an Edinburgh master at St Andrews 'unles they had bene requysted thereunto by the Arch-bishops letter from whom the power of conferring degreis heir flowes'.[60] Opponents of James's policies railed against the reintroduction of the doctorate. The presbyterian historian and minister David Calderwood wrote that, 'This noveltie was brought in amongst us without advise or consent of the kirk'.[61] Similarly, John Row, minister of Carnock, wrote of his aversion to the doctorate and its connection to prelacy: 'for antichrist is the devil's eldest son and heir; and a proud prelat is antichrist's son and heir; and an hierarchiall doctor is the prelat's eldest son and heir; for, as we shall heare, they beloved to be doctorate ere they were inaugurated bishops'.[62] The degree was, therefore, linked with the rule of bishops and, alongside the Prayer Book, represented popish innovations foisted on the kirk. To hold the title of doctor of divinity was to bear the mark of these infringements on the church of Scotland's autonomy.

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[58] Henderson, *Religious Life in Seventeenth-Century Scotland*, 40–3; Reid, *Humanism and Calvinism*, 87.

[59] *Original Letters Relating to the Ecclesiastical Affairs*, ii. 807.

[60] Edinburgh University Library, Special Collections [EUL], Dc.1.4/1 fo. 7r.

[61] Calderwood, *History*, vii. 222.

[62] John Row, *The History of the Kirk of Scotland, from the Year 1558 to August 1637*, ed. David Laing (Edinburgh, 1842), 260–1.

That Henderson's answers included not only a defence of the covenanting movement, but also a distinctly presbyterian vision of the church and state that defined a thoroughly Calvinistic conception of the role of the university professor, was indicative of the extent to which attitudes in St Andrews diverged from his own. The St Andrews masters, in addition to opposing the Covenant, had produced an opposing interpretation of Scottish political and religious history since the reformation. They disagreed with the covenanters' leading divine over the legal definitions of the kirk, of matters of church ceremony and polity. This would lead Henderson to conclude at the Glasgow general assembly that unworthy men had been 'admitted to the most eminent places of the kirk and schoolls of divinitie'.[63] In St Andrews Henderson had confronted academics who were hostile to the Covenant but charged with educating Scotland's future ministry. Though they eventually subscribed, their initial opposition and their understanding of what constituted orthodoxy in the kirk represented an incongruent confessional vision. The imposition of the covenanting vision would begin at the Glasgow general assembly.

Glasgow

We may also trace Glasgow University's initial opposition to the Covenant to the episcopalian royalism developed during the reign of James VI and I. The university's adherence to the Five Articles of Perth had driven Robert Blair from its halls, Blair later becoming a leading covenanter, in 1623. It was reported erroneously in Charles I's *Large Declaration* that Blair, a regent at Glasgow since 1616, had been expelled from Glasgow for teaching his students that

[63] Rothes, *Relation*, 101.

monarchical government was unlawful.[64] In truth, Blair had fallen into dispute with the then archbishop of Glasgow, James Law, and his acolyte, Glasgow's principal, John Cameron, over the recently ratified Five Articles. Blair chose to demit his place and answer a call from the ministry in Ulster rather than conform to the Five Articles.[65] It was at Glasgow that Blair's former student, the well-known theologian and diarist Robert Baillie, established his future covenanting links. Before graduating M.A. in 1620, he came under the tutelage of Blair and David Dickson, both members of the kirk's emerging 'radical wing' who would become leading covenanters.[66] As a regent from 1626, the same year John Strang became principal, Baillie counted among his students Archibald Johnston of Wariston.[67] It is somewhat ironic that the university that cultivated many of the covenanters' leading minds initially opposed the movement. In April 1638 Baillie wrote that, 'The greatest opposites in the West to this subscription are our friends in Glasgow: all the Colledge without exception'.[68] In March the Tables dispatched Baillie and Dickson and the lords Boyd, Kerr and Blair to Glasgow to secure

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[64] *Munimenta Alme Universitatis Glasguensis: records of the University of Glasgow, from its foundation till 1727*, ed. Cosmo Innes, 4 vols (Glasgow, 1854) [*Glasgow Munimenta*], iii. 376; [Charles I], *A Large Declaration Concerning the Late Tumults in Scotland* (London, 1639), 324.

[65] Thomas McCrie, *The Life of Mr Robert Blair, Minister of St Andrews* (Edinburgh, 1848), 37–48.

[66] See David Stevenson, 'Conventicles in the kirk, 1619–37: the emergence of a radical party', *Records of the Scottish Church History Society* 18 (1974) 99–114; 'The radical party in the kirk, 1637–1645', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 25 (1974) 135–65.

[67] *Glasgow Munimenta*, iii. 14, 52, 367–8, 378.

[68] *LJB*, i. 63.

the university's subscription.[69] They were met with resistance. As in St Andrews, opposition in Glasgow challenged the Covenant's legality while adhering to royal authority and the episcopal tradition.

Whereas St Andrews produced a corporate written response, Glasgow initially resisted the Covenant in a more public manner. After refusing the overtures of the commissioners, Glasgow's masters celebrated Easter Sunday in Glasgow cathedral where they took communion kneeling, with Principal John Strang among those administering the sacrament. Meanwhile, supporters of the Covenant, including Robert Wilkie, dean of faculty and vice-chancellor of the university, chose to worship in the Trongate's Laigh kirk, where communion was celebrated seated.[70] It is unclear whether the congregants at Glasgow cathedral knelt at communion deliberately to provoke the covenanters. John Strang, for instance, had initially opposed the Five Articles in 1618 but, as will be demonstrated below, he was also a firm royalist and it is not unlikely that he adhered to the practice on a consistent basis.[71] Nevertheless, kneeling was a visible sign of adherence to the Five Articles, the implications of which was not lost on the covenanters: their observance was incompatible with support for the covenant. This episode

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[69] *Ibid.*; Rothes, *Relation*, 82.

[70] *LJB*, i. 63; *Glasgow Munimenta*, iii. 351, 380.

[71] Stuart Handley, 'Strang, John (1583/4–1654) ', *ODNB* [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/26632, accessed 15 Jan. 2016]. See also A. D. Campbell, *The Life and Works of Robert Baillie (1602–1662): Politics, religion and record-keeping in the British civil wars* (Woodbridge, 2017), 153–4.

confirmed Baillie's lack of confidence going into the mission—'I foresaw it was in vaine'—and he lamented the rift that had opened amongst Glasgow's ministry and university.[72]

Principal Strang was a key figure in Glasgow's opposition and an important reminder that opposition to the Prayer Book did not translate automatically into support for the Covenant.[73] According to Baillie, Strang's opposition to the Prayer Book 'did a great deal of good to further that universall refuseall of the Book which followed'. But, for all of Baillie's urging, Strang resisted the Covenant.[74] Another Glasgow alumnus stepped in to attempt to convince Strang and Glasgow's masters to subscribe. Johnston of Wariston, alongside Principal Adamson of Edinburgh, travelled to Glasgow in late July to hear the masters' protests and settle matters in the university. Glasgow's masters required a separate declaration stating that the Covenant was not prejudicial to royal authority, that episcopacy and the authority of bishops were lawfully guaranteed and that religious innovations would everywhere be resisted.[75] Glasgow would subscribe, but only conditionally. According to Wariston's account, Adamson made it clear that the Covenant already expressed these 'conditions', but he seemed to have been prepared to allow at least a verbal declaration to be made. Wariston, however, disagreed vehemently. He interjected that neither a verbal nor written declaration would be permitted; it would be contrary to their entire mission. Wariston 'urged that any man, quho would subscryve, sould subscryve

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[72] *LJB*, i. 63.

[73] Reid, *Divinity Principals*, 264.

[74] *LJB*, i. 28.

[75] *Ibid.*, i. 67.

cum silentio et in communi forma without expression of any reservation quhatsomever'.[76] For Wariston, an uncompromising promoter of the Covenant who viewed Scotland as a new Israel, anything less than unconditional subscription was unacceptable.[77] His harangue convinced most of the masters to subscribe but Strang maintained his opposition to unconditional subscription for several weeks further. In a subsequent letter, Baillie was relieved to have heard that his friend had 'come much nearer' to subscribing, and 'that ye shall come on that little step which remains'.[78] But even Baillie noted that any declaration attached to the Covenant was out of the question. As Adamson had already argued, an extra set of conditions would be redundant. By autumn 1638 it appears that Strang, the last of Glasgow's holdouts, had signed, even if his subscription had been, in his mind, conditional.

The introduction of the King's Covenant in September would demonstrate just how tenuous Strang's subscription had been. On 22 September James, marquis of Hamilton, Charles's commissioner for Scotland, delivered the king's proclamation.[79] What became known as the King's Covenant 'discharged' the service book, canons, high commission and the practice of the Five Articles. It called for a general assembly to meet on 21 November and a parliament to meet

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[76] *Diary of Sir Archibald Johnston of Wariston. Vol. I: 1632–1639*, ed. G. M. Paul (ed.), Scottish History Soc. (Edinburgh, 1911), 367–9.

[77] See e.g. *ibid.*, 300–1. See also Peter Donald, 'Archibald Johnston of Wariston and the politics of religion', *Records of the Scottish Church History Society* 24 (1991) 123–40.

[78] *LJB*, i. 66.

[79] On the king's covenant and its formation, see Stevenson, *Scottish Revolution*, 104–12; Donald, *Uncounselled King*, 92–103; K. M. MacKenzie, 'Restoring the nation? Hamilton and the politics of the National Covenant', *International Review of Scottish Studies* 36 (2011) 67–91.

the following May. The King's Covenant also reproduced the Negative Confession, to which Charles ordered subscription.[80] These concessions appeared substantial but few covenanting leaders were convinced of Charles's sincerity, especially as preparations for war continued south of the Tweed. Johnston of Wariston, Henderson, Rothes and Loudon penned a protest declaring that the proclamation did little to allay fears, for the king had previously expressed his approval of the Prayer Book. They also protested the inclusion of bishops at the proposed general assembly and argued against the King's Covenant superseding the National Covenant, to which a vast number of Scots had already subscribed.[81] Charles had thus done little to quell unrest in advance of the sought-after general assembly, which was to be held in Glasgow as opposed to Edinburgh, Scotland's revolutionary centre. Indeed, the Glasgow presbytery and university masters readily subscribed to the King's Covenant.[82]

The lords Loudon and Boyd, together with David Dickson, subsequently railed against the King's Covenant in the Glasgow presbytery and produced a bill first drawn up in the presbytery of Edinburgh that indicted prelates on charges of doctrinal error, immoral living and religious innovation, and called all bishops to be tried at November's general assembly.[83] At the same

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[80] *The Register of the Privy Council of Scotland, 1625–1660*, second ser., ed. P. H. Brown, 8 vols (Edinburgh, 1899–1908), vii. 64–78.

[81] The covenanters' protestation is printed in [Charles I], *Large Declaration*, 157–73. See also *Diary of Sir Archibald Johnston*, 390–92; James Gordon, *History of Scots Affairs, from 1637 to 1641*, ed. Joseph Robertson and George Grub, 3 vols, Spalding Club (Aberdeen, 1841), i. 118-19.

[82] Edinburgh, National Records of Scotland [NRS], GD 406/1/445.

[83] *Records of the Kirk*, 94–8.

time, unbeknownst to the covenanters, Strang was writing a defence of the King's Covenant that garnered the praise of Walter Balcanquhal, the Scottish dean of Rochester, as well as the king. In a letter to William Laud, archbishop of Canterbury, in October, Balcanquhal spoke of Strang as the 'the learnedst covenanter in Scotland' and urged that the tract be published; Charles also desired that Strang 'owne what he writ'. Yet, in the charged climate of 1638 Strang did not dare affix his name to any tract that derided the National Covenant.[84] If Strang passively accepted the Covenant, his unpublished work on the King's Covenant and his correspondence with Balcanquhal illustrate that Baillie, Johnston of Wariston and Adamson had not truly convinced him.

Strang's tract denounced the covenanters' protestations against Charles's September proclamation and called for Scots to unite under the King's Covenant.[85] In conveying his disappointment with the covenanters' protests, he noted that the king had assented to all of their demands, which included the granting of a general assembly and parliament. Strang also believed, mistakenly as it turned out, that Charles's concessions signalled his intention to arrive at a peaceful settlement to the troubles, even if armament continued in England.[86] Tellingly, Strang also took a different approach from his counterparts at St Andrews and Aberdeen and did not label the National Covenant as illegal; he had, after all, signed it. He, instead, contended that

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[84] The covenanters learned of Strang's tract only in 1646, when it was discovered and came into possession of the Scottish commissioners at the Westminster Assembly. Correspondence between William Wilkie, a Glasgow regent in 1638, and Walter Balcanquhal were also discovered (*LJB*, i. 479–91).

[85] NLS, Wod. Fol. XXXI, fos 7r–24v.

[86] *Ibid.*, fos 9r–9v, 23v; Donald, *Uncounselled King*, 103–4.

the National Covenant had no staying power: it was a temporary fix that addressed present grievances but it would be 'impractical' in the future, especially because it lacked royal sanction. Strang argued that the confession of faith of the kirk 'ought to be perpetuall' and that it should be 'lawfullie subscryved be all men at any tyme, & speciallie when it is commandet be authoritie, therby to discerne the orthodox and heterodox'. He then wrote that it was absurd to think that those who had already signed the National Covenant could not subscribe to the King's Covenant.[87] For Strang, the King's Covenant was 'the best and strongest meane, that ever wes agried upon be publick authoritie, to preserve the puritie of religion'. On the nature of banding, Strang took a diplomatic tone. A general band without the inclusion of the king had been viewed as dangerous, which led to questions as to the National Covenant's legality. But Charles had taken the 'best course' to make the King's Covenant 'more valid' by removing the separation between the king and his subjects. In this regard, Strang echoed the arguments made by his counterparts at St Andrews in their initial arguments against the Covenant: the present restatement of the Negative Confession came with express royal authority, unlike the National Covenant. Thus for Strang, the National Covenant was flawed, while the King's Covenant was 'in no way impared'.[88]

Strang also argued that the King's Covenant would bind all subscribers in perpetuity because it was erected on the pillars of unity, peace and purity of doctrine. The Scots' repeatedly divergent judgements 'in church government in everie tyme' had no bearing on this confession. Similar to the thinking of his Aberdeen counterparts, Strang stated that ecclesiastical polity was

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[87] NLS, Wod. Fol. XXXI, fo 12v.

[88] *Ibid.*, fos 9r, 12r–12v.

secondary to the guarantee of unifying peace, which he saw in the King's Covenant.[89] He argued that none could deny the diversity of church governments among Europe's reformed churches, or that the kirk's polity had changed repeatedly since 1560. 'We need not expect a perfyt estate of Gods church', Strang wrote, 'or of the government thereof heir upon earth'.[90] His ambivalence over polity paralleled his ambiguity concerning the Five Articles. He acknowledged that Charles had ordered them 'discharged' but noted that the king would not suffer them altered nor abjured, for they did not fall under the scope of innovation.[91] Together with church government, the Five Articles neither advanced nor inhibited the peaceable unity of Scotland.

Glasgow's principal produced an optimistic reading of the King's Covenant, a rival to the National Covenant that ensured no affront to royal authority. Strang's work reiterated Glasgow's initial conditions for subscription: acceptance of the Covenant was predicated on total loyalty to the king and the guarantee that the kirk's legal definitions, which included episcopacy, remained unmolested. Glasgow's support of the King's Covenant demonstrated how a rival confessional paradigm could drive academic opposition and, therefore, constituted another flank in the

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[89] Strang was probably familiar with the Aberdeen Doctors' writings as their anti-covenanting polemics had already been published by autumn 1638. Balcanquhal also appears to have provided their writings to Glasgow (*LJB*, i. 482). On the Aberdeen Doctors' irenicism, see n. 97.

[90] NLS, Wod. Fol. XXXI, fos 7v–8r. Robert Baillie was also a proponent of 'lawful' episcopacy, and he casted the lone dissenting vote in the act abjuring episcopacy at the Glasgow assembly. See A. D. Campbell, 'Episcopacy in the mind of Robert Baillie, 1637–1662', *SHR* 93 (2014) 29–55.

[91] NLS, Wod. Fol. XXXI, fos 14v–15r. Baillie also shared this approach to the Five Articles, conceiving of them as adiaphora. See Campbell, *Robert Baillie*, 154–7.

covenanters' campaign to break resistance. It is thus unsurprising that one of the final acts of the Glasgow assembly in December was to eradicate this manner of opposition that had materialised at Glasgow University. The Assembly ordered all ministers and university masters to subscribe to the Covenant with a new oath, the Glasgow Declaration. It declared that episcopacy and the Five Articles were illegal and barred all from subscribing to 'contradictorie' oaths, such as the King's Covenant.[92] Glasgow's opposition, indeed, echoed that of St Andrews and the Aberdeen Doctors would state much of the same. Yet, even after the university's subscription, Glasgow's obstinacy illustrated the depths of the universities' aversion to the Covenant and that measures had to be taken to guard against rival confessions becoming entrenched in the minds of university academics, the individuals tasked with training a godly ministry and cultivating doctrinal orthodoxy.

Aberdeen

Aberdeen University posed the most spirited opposition to the covenanters. Whereas the origins of opposition in St Andrews and Glasgow can be traced to the ecclesiastical policies of James VI and I, Aberdeen's stance was in line with the conservatism and royalism that marked northeast Scotland. Beyond the intellectual opposition of the university, the region accounted for the bulk of subscriptions to the King's Covenant, while the Gordons of Huntly provided the chief military opposition.[93] Aberdeen's masters, unlike their brethren in St Andrews, could attack the Covenant from the security of their burgh.

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[92] *Records of the Kirk*, 40.

[93] On Aberdeen's subscriptions to the King's Covenant, see Stevenson, *Scottish Revolution*, 110–11. On Aberdeen's support for the king's cause and its opposition to the Covenant, see R. H.

Aberdeen's resistance was also notable given the internal strife that plagued King's College, the older of Aberdeen's two collegiate foundations, in 1638. A dispute had divided the college between supporters of the medieval 'old' and Melvillian 'new' foundations in the wake of the death of the college's reform-minded chancellor, Patrick Forbes, bishop of Aberdeen, in 1635.[94] This did not, however, diminish the strength of Aberdeen's opposition to the Covenant, at the forefront of which were the Aberdeen Doctors. The Doctors' leader, John Forbes of Corse, son of Bishop Forbes, was a well-regarded theologian and the covenanters' most formidable intellectual opponent. He had occupied the chair of divinity on its foundation at King's College in 1620 and reassumed it in 1635, after having served briefly as minister of kirk of St Nicholas kirk in (new) Aberdeen.[95] The remaining Doctors occupied academic and ecclesiastical posts in both Aberdeen and Old Aberdeen: Robert Baron was a divinity professor at Marischal College; Alexander Scroggie was minister at St Machar's in Old Aberdeen; Alexander Ross was minister

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Landrum, 'Convincing Aberdeen, 1638: the nation's reluctant converts', *Aberdeen University Review* 60 (2003) 80–95; Barry Robertson, 'The house of Huntly and the first Bishops' War', *Northern Scotland* 24 (2004) 1–15; Barry Robertson, *Royalists at War in Scotland and Ireland, 1638–1650* (Burlington, VT, 2014), 31–40. A comprehensive study of the civil war era in Aberdeen is found in Gordon DesBrisay, '"The Civill Warrs Did Overrun All": Aberdeen, 1630–1690', in E. P. Dennison, David Ditchburn and Michael Lynch (eds), *Aberdeen before 1800: A new history* (East Linton, 2002), 238–66.

[94] On the 'New' foundation, Patrick Forbes' reforms and the divisions within King's College, see Stevenson, *King's College*.

[95] D. G. Mullan, 'Forbes, John, of Corse (1593-1648)', *ODNB* [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/9836, accessed 15 Jan. 2016].

of Aberdeen and rector of King's; James Sibbald was minister of the kirk of St Nicholas; and William Leslie was principal of King's.[96] They espoused a theology informed by their environment, cultivated and fortified at the university under Bishop Forbes's stewardship. He formulated a doctrine that promoted protestant concord to counter the threat of popery. The Doctors deference to authority was tinted with an irenicist hue and, though they embraced the Five Articles and episcopacy, matters of church polity and ceremony were adiaphora that inhibited the true fight against Rome.[97] Whereas the covenanters cried foul of religious practices that seemed 'popish', the Doctors' theology was meant to counteract the presence of well-supported pockets of Catholics, the frontlines of which the Doctors inhabited.[98] Rigid polity and liturgy were secondary to protestant unity in the face of genuine catholic threats.

When the Prayer Book crises mounted in 1637, the Doctors first remained quiet, concerned with their own internal conflicts. In a diary entry for September 1637, Forbes seemed occupied with his work, praying for the universities and his health. He also prayed that his colleagues' drinking did not set a bad example for his students.[99] But Forbes acknowledged 'schismaticall disturbers' in an entry for October 1637, 'so willfullie blind, & so blindlie turbulent'. He prayed to God to 'illuminat, evert, forgive, & comfort those his servants whom error did miscarrie, & to

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[96] Stevenson, *King's College*, 110; Scott, *Fasti*, vii. 361–9; P. J. Anderson (ed.), *Officers and Graduates of University and King's College Aberdeen, MVD-MDCCCLX* (Aberdeen, 1893), 97–8.

[97] Denlinger, '"Men of Gallio's Naughty Faith?"', especially 63–79.

[98] Stevenson, *King's College*, 61–2, 106.

[99] Aberdeen University Library, Special Collections [AUL], MS 635, p. 141; Stevenson, *King's College*, 108.

teach us all the way of truth & peace'.[100] Following the introduction of the Covenant, Forbes began circulating his tract, *A Peaceable Warning*, an early anti-covenanting polemic. Forbes wrote that the covenanters' condemnation of the Prayer Book, Five Articles and episcopacy were unlawful actions that would break the 'Bond of Peace' and 'Christian Brotherhood' in Scotland and rent the kirk from Europe's reformed churches.[101] Though Forbes was urged to rescind his hotter language, he maintained that he was 'ready to lay doune my lyfe rather then to doe any thing against my conscience, and of this sorte is [subscryve] to youre Covenant'.[102] Forbes stuck to his conscience and maintained a doctrine antithetical to the Covenant: it was more broadly encompassing of ceremony and polity, more deferential to authority and more episcopalian than the rigid definitions formulated by his presbyterian counterparts. The covenanters' envoys, who included the marquis of Montrose, Henderson and Dickson, arrived on 20 July.[103]

Robert Baillie expressed cautious optimism that if his brethren succeeded in garnering Aberdeen's support, 'all our countrey, now to count of, is one man in this business'.[104] As the covenanters travelled north, John Forbes vowed to thwart their mission to 'persuade us & our people either by disputation, or secret negotiation or open threatenings & violence … to joyne

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[100] AUL, MS 635, pp. 145–6.

[101] John Forbes, *A Peaceable Warning, to the Subjects in Scotland: given in the yeare of God 1638* (Aberdeen, 1638), specifically 19–20. These arguments were later integrated into the Doctors' pamphlets against the covenanters.

[102] NRS, GD 401/1/416, 432, 639; AUL, MS 635, p. 158.

[103] John Spalding, *Memorialls of the Trubles in Scotland and in England, A.D. 1624–A.D. 1645*, ed. John Stuart, 2 vols, Spalding Club (Aberdeen, 1850), i. 91.

[104] *LJB*, i. 93.

with them in ther late confederacie, which we find it not lawfull for us to do'.[105] The July mission had modest success. Barred from the burgh's pulpits, Henderson, Dickson and the Aberdonian minister Andrew Cant preached in the Earl Marischal's yard in (new) Aberdeen and collected signatures in the burgh and countryside, including those of John Lundie, the King's College grammarian; Patrick Innes, the King's sacrist; and William Guild, a local minister whom the covenanters later installed as principal of King's in 1640.[106] Yet, the subscription of a grammarian and sacrist paled in comparison to the divinity professors. The covenanters were entirely unsuccessful in this endeavour. Though Henderson and Dickson had dealt previously with hostile university faculties, the Doctors proved much more formidable adversaries. At the heart of the debate that ensued were questions concerning royal authority, the fate of episcopacy and the Five Articles and the interpretation of the Negative Confession.

The covenanters and Doctors waged a 'paper war' in the space of four weeks. On 20 July the Doctors produced a pamphlet entitled *Generall Demands Concerning the Late Covenant*, a list of fourteen queries that outlined their chief objections to the Covenant and probed the covenanters' interpretation of the Negative Confession. Henderson, Dickson and Cant countered two days later in their *Answeres*. The trio, believing the *Answeres* to be sufficient, announced that they had satisfied all of the Doctors' queries in (new) Aberdeen on 22 July. They did have reason to be confident, for covenanter agents, and especially Henderson, had previously garnered the signatures of the masters of St Andrews and Glasgow after debate. But the force of the

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[105] AUL, MS 635, p. 158.

[106] *LJB*, i. 97; Spalding, *Memorialls*, i. 233–4; Gordon, *Scots Affairs*, i. 84–6. Guild was briefly an Aberdeen Doctor, and his name appears on an original printing of the *Generall Demands*. See EUL, La. I. 296/2.

Doctors' collective intellect combined with local opposition to the Covenant made Aberdeen a different case entirely.[107] Angered by claims that their queries had been answered sufficiently, the Doctors produced their *Replyes* to the covenanters' *Answeres*, in which they remarked that the 'Answeres (what-so-ever you think of them yourselves) have not given us that satisfaction which wee expected'. The covenanters then worked on a set of *Second Answers*, produced on 14 August. They subsequently left Aberdeen, having failed to acquire the Doctors' subscriptions. The Doctors, intending to have the last word, launched the final salvo in this dispute with their *Duplyes*, published in November.[108]

The paper war between the Doctors and covenanters demonstrated the ideological divide between the two factions, with resistance to the Covenant fortified, for the time being, behind the walls of Aberdeen University. The Doctors' waged a relentless assault on the Covenant but their arguments were not unlike those that had been posed by St Andrews and Glasgow. The Doctors' questioned the covenanters' authority to enforce subscription to the Covenant, which included 'their Interpretation' of the Negative Confession. They did not conceive of the Covenant as a verbatim reproduction of the Negative Confession, but as a product 'substantiallie different', one that abjured episcopacy and the legal parameters of the kirk; to argue otherwise was

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[107] Stevenson, *Scottish Revolution*, 64–79; Landrum, 'Convincing Aberdeen', 84.

[108] The pamphlets were printed side-by-side by presses in Aberdeen and London. See *Generall Demands, Concerning the Late Covenant, Together with the Answeres of Those Reverend Brethren to the Sayd Demands: As Also the Replyes of the Foresayd Ministers and Professors to Their Answeres* (Aberdeen: Edward Raban, 1638); *The Second Answers of Some Brethren of the Ministerie to the Replies of the Ministers and Professours of Divinitie in Aberdene, Concerning the Late Covenant. Also, Duplies* (London: Robert Young, 1638). See also below, n. 118.

misleading.[109] They furthermore emphasised the parliamentary statute of 1585 outlawing banding.[110] The Doctors also evinced their unconditional loyalty to the king, stressing that Charles had never intended to foist innovations on the kirk and had recently discharged 'all that which made men feare Novations', including the Prayer Book, canons and the high commission. To the Doctors, this proved the king's commitment to maintaining 'the true Protestant Religion'.[111] Their royalism, and their willingness to accept Charles's proclamations wholesale, echoed the underlying logic of Principal Strang's writings in support of the King's Covenant. For the Doctors, then, the Covenant made loyalty to the king conditional and they questioned how anyone could disobey the Five Articles yet defend the king's authority, the former having been authorised by the monarchy.[112] The Covenant would cause nothing more than division in Scotland, as recent 'disorders' and 'miscarriages' that the covenanters had encouraged already made clear.[113]

The covenanters reiterated familiar responses to these arguments, many of which resembled Alexander Henderson's initial set of answers to St Andrews in March. Thus Henderson, Dickson and Cant maintained that they had not come to Aberdeen to force the Covenant upon the town's inhabitants but, instead, to make clear 'the present Case and Condition of this Kirke and Kingdome; crying for helpe', and to solicit their 'Brotherlie love' for

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[109] *General Demands ... Answers ... and Replies*, 3, 14–15, 20–5, 39–41.

[110] *Ibid.*, 9–12.

[111] *Ibid.*, 12–14.

[112] *Ibid.*, 28–32.

[113] *Ibid.*, 36.

'extinguishing the common Combustion' that had beset Scotland.[114] They also maintained that the statute of 1585 outlawed bonds of manrent, not 'general Covenants'.[115] Throughout their answers, the covenanters maintained that the Prayer Book, canons and high commission required immediate abjuration because they represented popish innovations, while the 'practise' of episcopacy and the Five Articles should be abstained for matters of expediency, until which time they could be tried at a general assembly.[116] To each of these answers, the Doctors countered with extensive replies, never intending for the covenanters to have the final word on their initial fourteen demands. The debate demarcated clearly the Doctors' support of divine right kingship, their deference to episcopacy and the Five Articles and their irenicism, and the covenanters' presbyterianism, adherence to the two kingdoms paradigm and Calvinist resistance theory.[117]

Aberdeen had been the last major obstacle in the covenanters' efforts to unite Scotland but the burgh's opposition, amplified by the Aberdeen Doctors' resistance, proved to be a major impediment. Articulate university academics had repudiated many of the covenanters' main arguments. Yet while St Andrews and Glasgow eventually subscribed to the Covenant, the Aberdeen Doctors refused entirely. This was an embarrassment for the covenanters, especially as their dispute with the Doctors, unlike their dealings with St Andrews and Glasgow, played out on a public stage. The Doctors made great use of printing via their access to the Aberdeen press of Edward Raban, the England-born printer who had served as something of an official publisher

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[114] *Ibid.*, 4.

[115] *Ibid.*, 9–10.

[116] *Ibid.*, 13, 15–16, 21–2, 26, 29–30, 32, 34, 39, 41–2.

[117] See also Stewart, 'Aberdeen Doctors', 38, and especially Mullan, *Scottish Puritanism*, ch. 8, on the intersection of these political theories and theological thinking in early-modern Scotland.

for the university since 1622.[118] The Doctors' pamphlets were also printed concurrently at the royalist press in London operated by Robert Young, therefore, ensuring the wide distribution of their works, and by extension the nature of their dispute with the covenanters.[119]

Indeed, Aberdeen's resistance had not been lost on Charles and Hamilton, who communicated with the Doctors throughout 1638. Charles had thanked Forbes for writing his *Peaceable Warning* in April, and later expressed his delight at learning that the covenanters had been prohibited from preaching in the burgh.[120] He also wrote that the Doctors continued to do him a great service, and that their actions were reflective of what he expected of divines, unlike 'some of your owne professione whose judgement we purpose to aske therein'.[121] Hamilton also expressed his gratitude and had the Doctors' writings printed in Edinburgh.[122] These letters were a source of encouragement for the Doctors, who acknowledged that their work was 'more then

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[118] Iain Beavan, 'Raban, Edward (d. 1658)', *ODNB* [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/22970; accessed 15 Jan. 2016]. On the Aberdeen Doctors and Raban's press, see J. F. K. Johnstone *et al.* (eds), *Bibliographia Aberdonensis*, 2 vols, Third Spalding Club (Aberdeen, 1929), i. 282–7; Ogilvie, 'The Aberdeen Doctors and the National Covenant', 75–86, at 83–6; Reid, 'Reformed Scholasticism', 149–78, at 150–2. See also P. J. Anderson, *Notes on Academic Theses, with Bibliography of Duncan Liddell*, Edinburgh Bibliographical Soc. (Aberdeen, 1912).

[119] See David Stevenson, 'A revolutionary regime and the press: the Scottish covenanters and their printers, 1638-51', *Library*, 6th series, 7 (1985) 315–37.

[120] Spalding, *Memorialls*, i. 98.

[121] NRS, GD 406/1/724.

[122] NRS, GD 406/1/697; Spalding, *Memorialls*, i. 98–9.

[*sic*] ordinarie obligation'. They were engaged in more than an academic dispute—it was a vital service to their sovereign to repulse the 'stormes dayly menacing us'.[123]

Though the Doctors debated confidently with the covenanters, they met news of the impending general assembly with trepidation and pled 'for our exemption' from attending, fearing that they would receive 'much evill' in Glasgow.[124] In letters to Hamilton and Huntly in the weeks before the Glasgow general assembly, the Doctors claimed distance, weather and ill health would bar their attendance. They also wrote that 'we due still feare that our presence at that assemblie may also be hurtfull to the cause'.[125] The Doctors recognised their notoriety and realised the assembly would be stacked against them: only ministers and elders could attend, while bishops were ineligible; commissioners were overwhelmingly covenanters.[126] The Doctors' misgivings were confirmed when Robert Baron and James Sibbald were rejected in favour of a rival commission for Aberdeen of William Guild and David Lindsay, both signatories of the Covenant. Furthermore, the representative for the university would not be Principal Leslie, but the grammarian John Lundie, also a subscriber.[127] The Doctors' non-attendance was detrimental to Hamilton's plans. Their absence helps to explain in part why Hamilton attempted to dissolve the assembly after a week—he had no formidable support to counter the covenanters' agenda.

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[123] NRS, GD 406/1/664, 667.

[124] NRS, GD 406/1/446, 451, 725. On Aberdeen and the Glasgow assembly, see Stevenson, *King's College*, 110–14.

[125] NRS, GD 406/1/665, 666, 668.

[126] On the election of commissioners, see Stevenson, *Scottish Revolution*, 106–23.

[127] Gordon, *Scots Affairs*, i. 154–5.

Beyond posing the strongest and most vocal intellectual challenge to the covenanting movement, the Aberdeen Doctors' opposition has also captured historians' attention. But, as has been demonstrated in this study, the Doctors' resistance was not unique. There are parallels that link Aberdeen's opposition to that of St Andrews and Glasgow, not the least of which include deference to royal authority, the maintenance of episcopacy, the preservation of church ceremony defined in the Five Articles and the consensus that the covenanters acted illegally. To these arguments the Doctors added an irenic tenor symptomatic of the burgh's traditional conservatism. But whereas St Andrews and Glasgow eventually subscribed to the Covenant, the Aberdeen Doctors did not. Thus when the deposition of ministers under the covenanters commenced, the bulk of the purging of the university faculty took place at Aberdeen.[128] The covenanters appeared prepared to allow professors who had initially opposed the movement to continue in their posts so long as they subscribed. What the covenanters could not countenance, however, were uncovenanted university masters.

Conclusion

This study of the Scottish universities' opposition to the National Covenant has highlighted the competing interpretations of liturgy, church polity and kingship held by the large majority of

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[128] For overviews of the purge of the Aberdeen Doctors and the protracted nature of John Forbes of Corse's deposition, see Stevenson, *King's College*, 115–19; A. C. Denlinger, 'Swimming with the reformed tide: John Forbes of Corse (1593–1648) on double predestination and particular redemption', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 66 (2015) 67–89, at 67–9. The minutes of the 1640 general assembly at Aberdeen also recount the purge of several of the Doctors. See NLS, Wod. Qu. XXVI, fos 85r–88v, 91v, 99r–99v, 103r–103v, 104r.

Scotland's professoriate as the covenanters pursued their cause in 1638. Scotland's universities initially opposed the Covenant because their masters diverged sharply from the covenanters concerning their interpretations of what constituted the legal parameters of the kirk and proper obedience to the king. This article has also asserted that intellectual opposition to the Covenant within Scotland's universities was not confined to the Aberdeen Doctors. In fact, Aberdeen's case is exceptional only because the university's opposition paralleled that of the burgh. St Andrews, meanwhile, was located in a region in which many inhabitants subscribed and the burgh council of Glasgow subscribed long before the university.[129] This resistance, nevertheless, exhibits how garnering subscriptions could be a protracted process that lacked any defined procedure; it also demonstrates the complexities of local responses that produced sometimes meaningless, and disingenuous, subscriptions.[130]

Despite the idiosyncrasies inherent in each subscription, the covenanting movement garnered widespread, though by no means universal support in Scotland.[131] Indeed, in one scholar's estimation, the Covenant was 'signed by everyone who mattered'.[132] Scotland's

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[129] *LJB*, i. 62; Stevenson, *Scottish Revolution*, 86.

[130] See C. R. Langley, *Worship, Civil War and Community, 1638–1660* (London, 2016), 23–33.

[131] See L. A. M. Stewart, 'Authority, agency and the reception of the Scottish National Covenant of 1638', in Robert Armstrong and Tadhg Ó hAnnracháin (eds), *Insular Christianity: Alternative models of the church in Britain and Ireland, c. 1570–c. 1700* (Manchester, 2013), 88–106; Julian Goodare, 'The Scottish revolution', in Sharon Adams and Julian Goodare (eds), *Scotland in the Age of Two Revolutions* (Woodbridge, 2014), 79–96.

[132] Julian Goodare, 'The rise of the covenanters, 1637–1644', in M. J. Braddick (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of the English Revolution* (Oxford, 2015), 43–59, at 46.

university masters, however, emerge as a professional group that came closest to complete opposition to the Covenant. Their resistance was not unified and this lack of coordination allowed the covenanters to proceed against each institution individually, eventually collecting the subscriptions of the masters of St Andrews and Glasgow before purging the Aberdeen Doctors from their academic and ecclesiastical posts. Despite the ultimate futility of this opposition, it nonetheless had significant ramifications, for it indicated that a substantial portion of academics, responsible for the education of future crops of ministers, harboured political and religious attitudes antithetical to covenanter visions. This opposition also garnered the praise of Charles I, who in the *Large Declaration* of 1639 commended the universities' refusal to subscribe to the Covenant and denounced the covenanters for failing to heed their judgement. The *Declaration*, which was affixed with the king's name but was likely written by Walter Balcanquhal, Archbishop John Spottiswoode of St Andrews and Bishop John Maxwell of Ross, suggested that royal authorities were well aware of the nature of resistance in the universities, as it praised the 'unanswerable Reasons' advanced in Aberdeen and St Andrews against the Covenant.[133] This was, of course, in addition to John Strang's tract defending the King's Covenant, which Charles and Balcanquhal had also read. That the king and Scottish bishops—those responsible for introducing the reviled Prayer Book—had valued the universities' opposition helps to explain in part why the covenanters made reforming the universities a chief objective in the 1640s. Thus in his opening sermon at the general assembly of 1639, Alexander Henderson, who had confronted the better part of Scotland's university masters that refused the covenant, exhorted to his covenanting brethren that a learned and godly ministry was predicated on capable, and orthodox,

[133] [Charles I], *Large Declaration*, 72–3. Baillie made reference to the authorship of Balcanquhal and the Scottish bishops in a letter to his cousin in September 1639. See *LJB*, i. 208.

university professors: 'as was the schollar, so was his master'.[134] The universities required conversion from bastions of episcopalian royalism into institutions that promoted the confessional ideals of covenanted Scotland. Further scholarly inquiry is required on the ways in which the covenanters integrated the universities into their fledgling confessional state. But by recognising the nature of the universities' initial opposition to the Covenant, we are, at the very least, able to gain a better understanding of the ideological debates that marked the initial phase of the Scottish revolution.

[134] Peterkin (ed.), *Records of the Kirk*, 238–9.