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The Quest for a British Reformed and Covenanted Union – An Unrealized Ideal of the Scottish Covenanters' Collective Identity

Introduction and Historical Context

This article discusses the relations between England, Scotland, and Ireland, the nations that formed the Stuart Kingdoms in the 17th century and more specifically the point of view of the Scottish Covenanters, from 1637 to 1647. The Civil War period has been referred to as the British Civil Wars or, by a more traditional term, the English Civil Wars, which often implies to the essential role of England during these wars. There is indeed good reason to refer to the hostilities of 1642–1648 as the English Civil Wars, but it should be noted as well that Scotland occupied a highly important and direct role in those wars as early as 1644. The problematic nature of the term is further underscored by the fact that the Bishops Wars' of 1639 and 1640, between England and Scotland, and the rebellion that began in Ireland in 1641 contributed to an emotional upheaval and the outbreak of the Civil Wars in England. It is thus quite justifiable to agree with the arguments made by Conrad Russell and other historians who have claimed that the English Civil Wars should not be seen as a separate incident but rather as part of a larger entity which could then be called the British Civil Wars.¹

¹ Conrad Russell, *The Fall of the Monarchies 1637–1642*. Oxford University Press, Oxford 1991, 218–219. A short historiography with a discussion on whether the war was an English or a British one is in Peter Gaunt, *The British Wars 1637–1651*. Routledge, London 1997, 1–5. A short but revealing description of the Civil Wars with an international dimension is in John Morrill, "Introduction". *The Civil Wars. A Military History England, Scotland and Ireland 1638–1660*. Edited by John Kenyon & Jane Ohlmeyer. Consultant Editor John Morrill. Oxford University Press, Oxford 1998, xx–xxi. See also Austin Woolrych, *Britain in Revolution 1625–1660*. Oxford University Press, Oxford 2004, 2–6; Esko Nevalainen, *Skotlannin osuus Englannin sisällissodan kehitymisessä 1639–1643*. Yleisen historian lisensiaatintutkimus. Oulun yliopisto. Oulu 1999, 12–13.



Also the appropriate term, namely, War of, or for, the Three Kingdoms has been used earlier,² thus, it is also used here.

Some historians have duly noted the interconnections between the three Kingdoms.³ John Morrill has written about “a billiard ball effect,” wherein each of the three Kingdoms responded in various ways to a shared problem.⁴ The interconnections between religion, nation, and politics also underscore the importance of defining the international and British dimension of the Scottish Covenanters’ views on these matters. Taking these aspects into consideration, British history studies and particularly those concerning the Scottish National Covenant and Kirk, that clarify the “the Scottish Revolution”, and examine the framework and narrative of the Covenanters’ actions and politics, are important.⁵ Key aspects when examining the Covenanters’ vision for a union of the British Isles and which could be defined as “confederal”, have been set forth by Allan I. Macinnes.⁶ Concerning the wars between 1639 and 1651, the term “Wars of the Covenant” has also been used.⁷ From

² J. G. A. Pocock, “The Atlantic Archipelago and the War of the Three Kingdoms”. *The British Problem c. 1534–1707*. Edited by Brendan Bradshaw & John Morrill. Palgrave MacMillan, New York 1996, 172. Particularly from the Covenanters’ point of view Allan Macinnes has defined the term as Wars for the three kingdoms. Allan I. Macinnes, “The ‘Scottish Moment’, 1638–45”. *The English Civil War. Conflict and Contexts, 1640–49*. Problems in Focus Series. Edited by John Adamson. Palgrave Macmillan, Houndmills 2009, 123; Allan I. Macinnes & Jane Ohlmeyer, “Awkward Neighbours?” *The Stuart Kingdoms in the Seventeenth Century. Awkward Neighbours*. Four Courts Press, Dublin 2002, 18.

³ See for example Conrad Russell, *The Causes of the English Civil War*. The Ford Lectures Delivered in the University of Oxford. Clarendon Press, Oxford 1990, 245; David Stevenson, “The Century of the Three Kingdoms”. *History Today*. Volume 35 Issue, March 1985, 29–30.

⁴ John Morrill, “The Nature of the English Revolution”. *The Nature of the English Revolution*. Essays by John Morrill. Longman, London 1993, 6. Regarding the interdependency between the Kingdoms see Stevenson 1985, 29–30.

⁵ David Stevenson, *The Scottish Revolution 1637–1644: The Triumph of the Covenanters*. Newton Abbot, Worcester 1973; David Stevenson, *Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Scotland 1644–1651*. Royal History Society, London 1977; John R. Young, “The Scottish Parliament and National Identity from Union of the Crowns to the Union of the Parliaments, 1603–1707”. *Image and Identity. The making and re-making of Scotland Through the Ages*. Edited by Dauvit Brown, R. J. Finlay & Michael Lynch. John Donald Publishers Ltd, Edinburgh 1998; Laura A. M. Stewart, *Rethinking the Scottish Revolution: Covenanted Scotland 1637–1651*. Oxford University Press, Oxford 2016.

⁶ Allan I. Macinnes, “Covenanting Ideology in seventeenth-century Scotland”. *Political Thought in Seventeenth Century Ireland. Kingdom or Colony*. Edited by Jane H. Ohlmeyer. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2000, 192–193, 216; Macinnes 2009, 126, 149; Allan I. Macinnes, *The British Confederate. Archibald Campbell. Marquess of Argyll, 1607–1661*. John Donald, Edinburgh 2011, 161, 183, 251.

⁷ This term, though not commonly used, has been mentioned in the Oxford Companion to Scottish History in connection to the British Wars. John Young, “Wars of the Covenant”. *The Oxford Companion to Scottish History*. Ed. by Michael Lynch. Oxford University Press, Oxford 2001, 110–113.

a Scottish perspective of the Civil Wars, there is reason to emphasize the importance of the Scottish National Covenant as a crucial element in the turbulent events of the British Isles. Herein the outbreak of the British Civil Wars and the participation of the Scottish Covenanters are interpreted as outcomes of a religio-national identity that was under threat.⁸

The focus of this article is on the international dimension of the Scottish Covenanting identity, but it also needs to be said that from the point of view of identity, these international aspects should be understood as being interconnected and related to their overall national and religious dimensions.⁹ The aspiration in this study has been to explore the self-image of the Covenanting elite and determine how they viewed themselves and other groups and then study these images as indicators of that self-image. In other words, using this methodological view, the images of the self and others will formulate the self-image of the group (a collective identity). In historical study of images, it should further be noted that the specific object of this study is the possessor or creator of the image, not the object of the image itself.¹⁰ In this study, the writings of the contemporary leaders of the Covenanting movement are used as primary sources to analyze the different textual indicators of

⁸ This theoretical interpretation is outlined in Nevalainen 1999, 24–25, 127; Esko Nevalainen, “The Scottish National Covenant as a Symbol and the Identity of the Scottish Covenanters”. *Imagology and Cross-Cultural Encounters in History*. *Studia Historica Septentrionalia* 56. Pohjois-Suomen Historiallinen Yhdistys, Rovaniemi 2008, 101, 104; Esko Nevalainen, “Englannin ja Skotlannin välinen suhde sisällissotien aikakaudella ydin- ja periferia-käsitteiden näkökulmista”. *Keskus ja periferia muuttuvassa maailmassa*. Edited by Kari Alenius & Olavi K. Fält. Pohjois-Suomen Historiallinen Yhdistys, Rovaniemi 2014, 19. David Stevenson has mentioned that Scottish identity was threatened by absorption by England. David Stevenson, “The Early Covenanters and the Federal Union of Britain”. *Britain and Scotland 1286–1815*. Edited by Roger A. Mason. John Donald Publishers Ltd, Edinburgh 1987, 165. See Stevenson 1985, 29.

⁹ I have studied the British Civil War period from the point of view of the collective identity of the Scottish Covenanting elite, from 1637 to 1647, in three dimensions: national, religious and international. The international dimensions are displayed in Esko Nevalainen, *Providential Instruments for Reformation and Liberty. The Collective Identity of the Scottish Covenanting Elite, 1637–1647*. *Studia Historica Septentrionalia* 79. Pohjois-Suomen Historiallinen Yhdistys, Rovaniemi 2018, 270–294.

¹⁰ Olavi K. Fält, “Introduction”. *Looking at the Other. Historical study of images in theory and practice*. Edited by Kari Alenius, Olavi K. Fält & Seija Jalagin. *Acta Universitatis Ouluensis B Humaniora* 42. University of Oulu, Oulu 2002, 9. See Olavi K. Fält, “Historiallisen mielikuvatutkimuksen teoreettiset juuret”. *Faravid* 31/2007. Pohjois-Suomen Historiallinen Yhdistys r.y., Rovaniemi 2007, 226. Concerning images of neighbors generally see Kari Alenius, “The Images of Neighbours: Estonians and Their Neighbours”. *Looking at the Other. Historical study of images in theory and practice*. Edited by Kari Alenius, Olavi K. Fält & Seija Jalagin. *Acta Universitatis Ouluensis B Humaniora* 42. University of Oulu, Oulu 2002, 59–60, 72–74, 78–79.

collective identity and thus bridge the distance between the theory of identity and the implications of collective identity found in the empirical research.¹¹

The main arguments in this article are that the Scottish Covenanters were defending first and foremost the Protestant Reformation and liberty that they perceived to be under threat.¹² The fundamental ideas that they represented in their Scottish National Covenant were by definitive formulation defined as national ones. However, essential to understanding this article is that these ideas, and particularly the objectives they aspired to, were interrelated with the reformation scheme and also seemed to communicate a strong sense of British identity. It is revealing that, although the seminal document of 1638 was named the Scottish *National Covenant*, the people who supported that document strove in the course of their political actions to create a *transnational* political construction, indeed a new British union with England. Though it did not succeed, the Scottish interaction with the English Parliamentarians became a vital feature in the political affairs of the entire British Civil War period and its revolutionary aftermath. From the Covenanting point of view a Protestant reformed Britain was seen as an ideal that penetrated a sense of national identity. An ideal union was not realised in a political sense, however, although it did serve as a dynamic force in changing the overall military and political situation in the British Isles.

Premises of the Anglo-Scottish Co-operation and British Aspirations

It has been said that at the beginning of the seventeenth century, virtually no one except James I of England, wanted to be British.¹³ King Charles I thought very much the same way as his father on this matter, but he displayed a political style of adamant and fundamental authority that ultimately intensified a tide of opposition in all of his Kingdoms. Surely it is not a coincidence that Anthony van Dyck's famous portrait of Charles I on horseback, now in the National Gallery, includes the text, "*Carolus*

¹¹ Nevalainen 2018, 23. The more in-depth theoretical premises and methods are represented in Nevalainen 2018, 36–45.

¹² Ideas concerning reformation and liberty is such a vast theme that I have discussed this interconnection in Esko Nevalainen, "Using Liberty and Reformation for Understanding Change: The Example of the Scottish Covenanters." *Transcultural Encounters II. Understanding Humans in Change*. Studia Historica Septentrionalia 80. Pohjois-Suomen Historiallinen Yhdistys, Rovaniemi 2018.

¹³ Jenny Wormald, "Introduction". *The Seventeenth Century. The Oxford History of the British Isles*. Edited by Jenny Wormald. Oxford University Press, Oxford 2008, 4; Jenny Wormald, "The Union of 1603". *Scots and Britons. Scottish political thought and the union 1603*. Edited by Roger A. Mason. Cambridge University Press. Cambridge 1994, 40.

I Rex Magna Britanniae".¹⁴ For Charles I, the idea of a Britain was essential, and he was willing to take action to make it a reality. This unifying project appears to have been important to the Scottish Covenanters as well but it was based on very different grounds and involved more diverse aspirations than those of King Charles. John Morrill has mentioned that "the most British thing..." in the 1630s was the Anglo-Scottish or British nobility, and that for the Scottish, the solution to their problem was having an extensive proposal for a federal union; however, the English had no interest in it.¹⁵ This viewpoint is a well-supported interpretation of the problem that Covenanters faced and the eventual failure of their scheme for the union. Allan Macinnes has discussed "the Scottish paradox" in which the Scots upheld James I's Britannic monarchy, but were the first to rebel against changes to the Britannic monarchy of Charles I.¹⁶ Professor Macinnes has also claimed that Charles I, Oliver Cromwell and the Scottish noble Marquess of Argyll presented competing and different perspectives of British identity. These were grounded in myth, prophecy, the humanistic scholarship of the Renaissance and Providence.¹⁷ Indeed, it is possible to discuss different sorts of British visions present in the first half of the seventeenth century, but it also seems that these aspirations were not displayed in any succinct or transparent manner, perhaps with the exception of King James.

When discussing the British dimension of the Civil Wars, the early co-operation between the Scottish Covenanters and their English opponents of personal rule during the Bishops' Wars, should be considered. It is revealing that the "*clandestyne band*", as stated in the royalist view of John Spalding's *History of the Troubles*, is mentioned as being created for the purpose of establishing a reformed religion in both Kingdoms, one without bishops.¹⁸ There is also cause to notice the aspiration

¹⁴ Anthony van Dyck, Equestrian Portrait of Charles I (about 1637–1638). National Gallery, London. The title "*the King of Great Britain*" was actually used during the Civil War period, at least in diplomatic texts. For instance, in French diplomatic correspondence this title was used in 1644 and 1645. For example, Mazarin to Montereuil December 1, 1645. Appendix. *The Diplomatic Correspondence of Jean de Montereuil and the Brothers of de Bellievre French Ambassador in England and Scotland. 1645–1648*. Edited with an English Translation and Notes by J. G. Fotheringham in two volumes. Printed at the University Press. T. and A. Constable for the Scottish History Society. Scottish History Society XXIX. Volume I. Edinburgh 1898, 578–580 [Hereafter *Montereuil I*]; Memorandum from Montereuil December 22, 1645. Appendix. Montereuil I, 575–576; Boisivon to Brienne July 8, 1644. Appendix. Montereuil I, 560.

¹⁵ John Morrill, "The National Covenant in its British Context". *The Scottish National Covenant in its British Context*. Edited by John Morrill. Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh 1990, 5–6. See also Stevenson 1987, 169, 171, 177–178.

¹⁶ Allan I. Macinnes, *The British Revolution 1629–1660*. British Studies Series. Palgrave Macmillan, Houndmills 2005, 75.

¹⁷ Macinnes 2011, 5.

¹⁸ *Memorialls of the Trubles in Scotland and in England A.D. 1624–A.D. 1645*. By John Spalding. In two volumes. Volume II. Printed for the Spalding Club. Aberdeen MDCCCL–MDCCCLI [1850–51], 139, 144, 152 [Hereafter Spalding]; Spalding I, 77.

for a renewed reformation. For instance, Conrad Russell has asserted that the cooperation of the “Twelve Peers” of the “incipient political party” in England with the Covenanters could be called an alliance.¹⁹ When we look at the petition of the twelve English peers, there is a great deal of evidence of this alliance. In their petition to the King in August 1640, the message of the peers was similar to the assertions of the Covenanters. These English petitioners maintained that Popery was a threat. They protested bringing in the Irish forces, and noted the importance of summoning Parliament.²⁰ These views were in line with the main points of the Scots. It is also very evident that the English could not challenge their King in the early 1640s without the assistance of the Scottish army. It was necessary for the English Parliamentarians to have Scottish assistance in bringing Charles I to heel.²¹ This conclusion is well supported. Given a common enemy, this British agenda already existed in the autumn of 1640. However, it should be noted that the evident cooperation between the English, who opposed the King, and the Scottish Covenanters did not necessarily mean there were common aspirations in place for a united Britain, let alone a British identity.

The Scottish Covenanters were obliged to explain their views to their English counterparts several times.²² The Scottish argued that they had both a common cause and common aims with the English Protestants. They further maintained these unified features in their publications, which in some cases were addressed to the English public at large. During the Second Bishops’ War in 1640, at the start of their invasion of England, they emphasized that their enemies were men who were “...*the enemies of Both Nations.*” Furthermore, in their manifesto, they called for the “*Peace of Both Kingdoms*” and “...*a perfect and durable Union and Love between the Two*

¹⁹ Conrad Russell, “The Scottish Party in English Parliaments 1640–42 OR the Myth of English Revolution”. *Historical Research*. The Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research. Volume LXVI. No. 159. February 1993, 49.

²⁰ Petition to the King of 12 English lords, your Majesty’s most loyal and obedient subjects, whose names are underwritten, in the behalf of themselves and divers others August 28, 1640. *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series*, of the Reign of Charles I 1640. Edited by William Douglas Hamilton. Reprinted by arrangement with Her Majesty’s Stationary Office, London, by Kraus Reprint. Ltd. Nendeln, Liechtenstein 1967, 639–640.

²¹ Russell 1993, 46, 50. See Gaunt 1997, 23.

²² Lord Archibald Johnston of Wariston mentioned this need already in 1638. July 10, 1638, January 26 and January 31, 1639. *Diary of Sir Archibald Johnston of Wariston 1632–1639*. Edited from the Original Manuscript with Notes and Introduction by George Morison Paul. Publications of the Scottish History Society. Vol. LXI. Edinburgh 1911, 361, 408–409; *The intentions of the Scottish army* [No date; August 1640]. Rushworth, *Historical Collections: Volume 3: 1639–40*. Originally published by D. Browne. London 1721. (British History Online. <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/rushworth-papers/vol3/pp283–291>. Date accessed June 10, 2009), 283–291. [Hereafter *The intentions of the Scottish army*]. There were also several other public manifests and supplications.

Kingdoms...”²³ If we take a closer look at these propositions and the aspirations that the Covenanters presented to their English counterparts, their ideals and aspirations for a united Britain are clearly revealed. In the public manifesto of the Covenanting army in 1640, a common cause between the Kingdoms was reiterated as “...*the ruin of the one will prove the ruin of both*”.²⁴ The Covenanters were of the view that the destinies of the two Kingdoms were bound together, and they saw their actions for unifying a goal as a necessity.

Prospects for British cooperation in religion and politics were further clearly stated in the conditions of negotiations for peace between Scotland and England in 1641. In addition to unity in religion, power of the Parliaments, a peace secured by the conservators of peace, a common foreign policy and triennial Parliaments were also mentioned.²⁵ The Covenanters found reason to explain and specify the Scottish aspirations further in March of 1641, which inflamed the political situation in England. The paper, written by the main theologian of the Covenanting movement of the time, Alexander Henderson, has since been asserted as very important as it revealed the different forces behind the Scottish demands for religious uniformity.²⁶ In it, Henderson discusses the desires of the Covenanters “*concerning unity in religion, and uniformity of Church government...as a special mean to conserve peace in His Majesty’s dominions.*” Herein, religion was primary, as it was described as the political glue. He continued by saying that “*Nothing so powerful to divide the hearts of people as division in religion; nothing so strong to unite them as unity in religion*”.²⁷ It is here appropriate to keep in mind that the Scottish Parliament also held to a principle of unity in religion as a means to conserve peace.²⁸ Yet, Henderson was being modest, or simply being politically careful, when he described

²³ *The intentions of the Scottish army*, 283–291. The importance of union and the common interests of the kingdoms were made clear in a remonstrance of 1640. *A remonstrance concerning the present troubles from the meeting of the Estates of the Kingdome of Scotland, Aprill 16. unto the Parliament of England*. [Leyden: W. Christiaens] Printed in the year of God 1640, 1–3.

²⁴ *The intentions of the Scottish army*, 283–291.

²⁵ *Index of the remanent heidis contenit in the 8 demandis foor establishing of a firme and dureable peace* 1641. *Spalding* II, 11–12.

²⁶ Charles L. Hamilton, “The Basis for the Scottish efforts to create a Reformed Church in England, 1640–41”. *Church History*. Vol 30, N:o 2, June 1961, 176.

²⁷ *Our desires concerning unity in religion, and uniformity of church government, as a special mean to conserve peace in His Majesty’s dominions*. In the Appendix of William Hetherington, *History of the Westminster Assembly of Divines*. 1853. Third Edition 1856 (Books for the Ages. AGES software. Albany, OR USA. Version 1.0. 1997. <https://reformed.org/reformed-books>. On-line source, date accessed August 5, 2019), 315–316. [Hereafter Hetherington, *History of the Westminster Assembly of Divines*].

²⁸ *Articles of the Large Treattie concerning the establishing of the peace...at Westminster...* August 7, 1641. *Acts of Parliaments of Scotland*. Volume V. Printed by command of His Majesty King George the Third, in pursuance of an address of the House of Commons of Great Britain. M.DC-CC.XVII [1817], 376.

Scottish aspirations as a mere desires, not rules.²⁹ In 1642, he noted the importance of religious unity in Scotland, England, and Ireland, but then maintained that it “... *must be brought to passe by common consent.*” He had no illusions regarding English enthusiasm for the Scottish ecclesiastical form.³⁰ However, the Covenanters clearly strove for a unifying British solution as necessary for implementing a reformation scheme and peace.

Archibald Campbell, the Marquess of Argyll and a leading Covenanting aristocrat, was advocating British cooperation as early as 1641 when he discussed “...*brotherly love and Government...*” in the context of English Church government and referred to the threat of abolishing the laws in both Kingdoms by a tyrannical government of the bishops.³¹ As the depiction in the name of the Bishops’ Wars also indicates, the deposition of the bishops was seen as constituent in Church government, as a passageway to uniformity and security in Scotland. But, this was only possible to achieve by unity with England. British co-operation and a British solution were also required. After the English Civil War had broken out in the summer of 1642, the Scottish Covenanters’ attempted to mediate a peace between the English Parliament and the King at the beginning of 1643, when John Campbell, the Earl of Loudoun, a seminal Covenanting nobleman, and Alexander Henderson went to Oxford for that purpose.³² At the same time, the Assembly of the Scottish Kirk petitioned Charles in an attempt to unify the Church government of the Kingdoms, noting that there was an alarming Catholic threat in the British Isles.³³ The Covenanters aspired to having united British cooperation, wherein the King and the Parliamentarians would join with the Scots in a reformed British unification. The threat of Roman Catholicism made an alliance with the Parliamentarians more and more preferable to the Covenanting elite.³⁴ It appears that the King, in the end to his own disadvantage, was not so keen on joining this British agenda of the Covenanters, but the English Parliamentarians

²⁹ *Our desires concerning unity in religion.* Hetherington, *History of the Westminster Assembly of Divines*, 315, 319, 324.

³⁰ Alexander Henderson to Robert Baillie April 20, 1642. Robert Baillie, *The Letters and Journals of Robert Baillie*, A.M. Principal of the University of Glasgow M.DC. XXXVII.–M.DC.LXII. Edited by David Laing. In three volumes. Volume II. Edinburgh MDCCC.XLI [1841], 2. [Hereafter Baillie I or II].

³¹ [The Earl of Argyll], *A true copy of a speech delivered in the Parliament in Scotland, by the Earle of Argyle concerning the government of the church: together with the Kings going to Parliament August 19, 1641.* London [s.n.] 1641, 2–4.

³² The Earl of Clarendon’s date is March 22, 1643. Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon, *The History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England begun in the year 1641.* Volumes I & II. With marginal notes by W. Dunn Macray. London 1948. Volume II, 504–505. [Hereafter Hyde, *History*].

³³ *The humble petition of the Commissioners of the General Assembly of the Kirk of Scotland*, met at Edinburgh January 4, 1643. Rushworth, *Historical Collections: Volume 5: 1642–45. 1721* (British History On-line. <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/rushworth-papers/vol5/pp387–504>. Date accessed August 3, 2015), 387–504. See Hyde, *History* II, 506–507.

³⁴ Nevalainen 1999, 109–110.

desired help and thus seized the day. The Covenanters and the English Parliament formed an alliance in the form of the Solemn League and Covenant of 1643.

The British Solution as Aspiration

Although “Great Britain”, as a state, must have been an ambiguous idea during the Civil Wars, in the Covenanters’ minds, a British agenda and cooperation was real and concrete enough. Already in 1638, Robert Baillie, a Scottish Covenanted Minister of the Presbyterian Kirk and an active participant in many political and religious debates,³⁵ mentioned that the Covenanters hoped that the “...*great work of reformation...*” that had begun in Scotland would spread to England and Ireland. Later in 1639 he described a British context when arguing that for Scotland it was necessary to keep “*Canterburian*” enemies at bay.³⁶ A threat to the Scottish Kirk that emerged from England and the need for Reformation seemed to intensify the British aspirations.

One of the reasons for the pursuit of a British union must have been the perceived Catholic threat from Ulster, as it was from where migrating Scots had brought information. The necessity of giving assistance to the Protestants in Ulster also reinforced the apocalyptic beliefs of the situation.³⁷ Indeed, there is no reason to underestimate the alarming news the Covenanters received from across the Irish Sea, as there was indeed a danger that the troubles would be transported to the west of Scotland and the Highlands in particular. The Irish issue was among the most important aspects of the British aspirations, as it related to security and connected to the larger framework of the “papist arch-enemy” and the apocalyptic mindset. Evidence of the Covenanters’ references to the alarming situation concerning Ireland

³⁵ Robert Baillie’s recent biographer has depicted him as a writer, and active participant in many of the political and religious debates, who identified his time as one with potential dramatic upheavals trying to make people to understand the Covenanters’ reactions to their Monarch’s actions. Alexander D. Campbell, *The Life and Works of Robert Baillie (1602–1662). Politics, Religion and Record-keeping in the British Civil Wars*. The Boydell Press, Woodbridge 2017, 2, 22–23, 24.

³⁶ Baillie to William Spang July 22, 1638. Baillie I, 89; Baillie to Spang February 12, 1639. Baillie I, 117.

³⁷ Macinnes 2000, 212. There is evidence of complex social dynamics of identity related to clerical emigrants fleeing from Ireland. The idea of Presbyterianism was not a united or unchanging one. Chris R. Langley, “Sheltering under the Covenant: The National Covenant, Orthodoxy and the Irish Rebellion, 1638–1641.” *The Scottish Historical Review*, Volume XCVI, 2: No. 243: October 2017, 137, 159.

was manifold and clear.³⁸ From the British point of view, it is also important to notice that the first concrete military cooperation of the Scots and English was the sending of Scottish troops to Ulster to protect the Protestant population there.³⁹ The existence of this army in Ireland is remarkable to recall, as it was called “*British*” by some contemporary authors,⁴⁰ although it would be more appropriate to talk of only British co-operation in maintaining this army.

The concept of Britain or invoking for a British identity were clearly mentioned a number of times in the Covenanters’ statements during the Civil Wars. Some members of the Covenanting elite, such as the Presbyterian minister, Samuel Rutherford, perhaps the most distinguished theorist of the Scottish revolution,⁴¹ used the concept “*Britain*” or “*Great Britain*” often, and there clearly was some sense of

³⁸ Information concerning the supplications 1638. John Earl of Rothes, *A relation of proceedings concerning the affairs of the Kirk of Scotland, from August 1637 to July 1638*. The Bannatyne Club, Edinburgh 1830, 185; *A declaration of the Lords of His Majesties Privie Councell and commissioners for conserving the articles of the treatie for the information of His Majesties good subjects of this kingdome*. Edinburgh: Printed by Evan Tyler, Printer to the Kings most Excellent Majesty, 1643, 2–3; Baillie *For Glasgow* August 7, 1644. Baillie II, 214. Robert Baillie used the notorious name “*The Irish butchers*” twice in his letter. *Public Letter* June 7, 1644. Baillie II, 191; Samuel Rutherford, *A sermon preached to the Honorable House of Commons: at their late solemne fast, Wednesday, January 31, 1643 [1644]*. Published by order of the House of Commons. Printed at London by Richard Cotes, for Richard Whittakers & Andrew Croke, and are to be sold at their shops in Pauls Church-Yard. [London] 1644 [Hereafter Rutherford, *Sermon to the House of Commons* 1644], 38–39; Samuel Rutherford, *Lex, Rex: The Law and the Prince: A Dispute for the just Prerogative of King and People: Containing the Reasons and Causes of the most necessary Defensive Wars of the Kingdom of Scotland and of their Expedition for the ayd and help of their dear Brethren of England. In which their Innocency is asserted and a full answer is given to a Seditious Pamphlet Intituled Sacro-sancta Regum Majestas, or, The Sacred and Royall Prerogative of Christian Kings, Under the Name of J. A. but penned by Jo. Maxwell the Excommunicate P. Prelat*. Published by Authority. London: Printed for Iohn Field. Octob. 7 1644, Question XXX, 315, Question XXIII, 264–265, 324. [Hereafter Rutherford, *Lex Rex*].

³⁹ The Scottish Estates offered their assistance on this matter. Baillie to Spang [no date] 1641. Baillie I, 396. See Nevalainen 1999, 87.

⁴⁰ For example, *A letter from General-Major Robert Monroe concerning the state of affairs in Ireland* June 11 [likely 1646]. Together with *The Lord Marques of Argyle’s speech to a grand committee of both houses of Parliament the 25th of this instant June, 1646 together with some papers of the commissioners for the kingdom of Scotland, wherein they do give their consent to the sending of the propositions of peace to His Majesty, and desire their armies to be supplied, and the accounts between the kingdoms to be perfected, to the end all armies may be disbanded, &c.: also His Majesties letter to the Marques of Ormond discharging all further treaty with the Irish rebel: and a letter from General Major Monro concerning the state of affairs in Ireland*. London: Printed for Lawrence Chapman, June 27, 1646, 13. [Hereafter Argyle’s Speech 1646].

⁴¹ Samuel Rutherford could be included with the extremists in the radical party, not among the Covenanting mainstream. John Coffey, “Samuel Rutherford and the Political Thought of the Scottish Covenanters”. *Celtic Dimensions of the British Civil Wars*. Proceedings of the Second Conference of the Research Centre in Scottish History. University of Strathclyde. Edited by John R. Young. John Donald Publishers Ltd, Edinburgh 1997, 77, 91.

identification in the Kingdoms with each other, particularly among Protestants in the three Kingdoms.⁴² Having a common Protestant cause and a common enemy in the Civil War strengthened the ideas of a unified Britain and a sense of Britishness. In 1641, Baillie wrote about the “*Cassandrian spirit*”⁴³ that threatened “*the Isle of Britaine*”.⁴⁴ He mentioned Britain again in 1644 in reference to the removal of the episcopacy and in the context of the Civil War wherein he clearly stated that the entire Isle of Britain was threatened.⁴⁵ Aspirations to have a new arrangement for the British Isles were very apparent also in Samuel Rutherford’s imaginary

⁴² Rutherford used the concept “*Great Britain*” and he emphasized the common cause of the Protestants in Scotland, England and Ireland in relation to “*King Jesus*”. Rutherford to the Persecuted Church in Ireland 1639. *Letters of Rev. Samuel Rutherford* principal and professor of divinity at St. Andrews, 1639–1661. Carefully Revised and Edited by the Rev. Thomas Smith D.D. With a Preface by the Rev. Alexander Duff D.D. Complete Edition. Oliphant Anderson & Ferrier. Edinburgh & London 1891, 413–415. [Hereafter *Letters of Samuel Rutherford*]. See Samuel Rutherford, *The due right of presbyteries or, A peaceable plea for the government of the Church of Scotland, wherein is examined 1. The way of the Church of Christ in New England, in brotherly equality, and independency, or coordination, without subjection of one church to another. 2. Their apology for the said government, their answers to thirty and two questions are considered. 3. A treatise for a church covenant is discussed. 4. The arguments of Mr. Robinson in his justification of separation are discovered. 5. His treatise, called, The peoples plea for the exercise of prophecy, is tryed. 6. Diverse late arguments against presbyteriall government, and the power of synods are discussed, the power of the prince in matters ecclesiastical modestly considered, & divers incident controversies resolved.* London: Printed by E. Griffin, for Richard Whittaker, and Andrew Crook and are to be sold at their shops in Pauls Church-Yard, 1644, [To the Reader] A4 [Hereafter Rutherford, *Peaceable Plea* 1644]; Rutherford, *Sermon to the House of Commons* 1644, 38–39, 43. He also emphasized a united Britain as early as 1634. Sermon on Isaiah XLIX, 1–4 July 19, 1634. *Fourteen Communion Sermons by the Rev. Samuel Rutherford.* With a Preface and Notes by Rev. Andrew A. Bonar, D.D. Second Edition, Enlargened. Charles Glass & Co., Glasgow 1877, 115, 117, 133.

⁴³ I have written about this “*Cassandrian spirit*” from the Covenanters’ point of view as implicating to seemingly peaceful reconciling but deceitful politics of the Covenanters’ Catholic or Arminian enemies but also related to Cardinal Richelieu’s political activities. Nevalainen 2018, 204, 212, 274.

⁴⁴ [Robert Baillie], *A parallel or briefe comparison of the liturgie with the Masse-book the breviarie, the ceremoniall and other Romish ritualls vvherein is clearly and shortly demonstrated not onely that the liturgie is taken for the most part word by word out of these antichristian writts: but also that not one of the most abominable passages of the masse can in reason be refused by any who cordially imbrace the liturgie as now it stands and is commented by the prime of our clergie: all made good from the testimonies of the most famous and learned liturgick writers both Romish and English / by R.B.K.* London. Printed by Thomas Paine 1641, A3.

⁴⁵ [Robert Baillie], *Satan the leader in chief to all who resist the reparation of Sion. As it was cleared in a sermon to the Honourable House of Commons at their late solemn fast, Febr. 28. 1643. By Robert Baylie, minister at Glasgow. Published by order of the House of Commons.* London: Printed for Samuel Gellibrand, at the Brasen Serpent in Pauls Church-yard, 1643 [i.e. 1644], 28; Baillie [For Scotland] January 1, 1644. Baillie II, 127; Baillie for Captain Porterfeild July 16 [1644]. Baillie II, 207. See also Baillie [to] Lord Eglintoun July 18, 1644, 210.

and providential vision. When the Scottish army joined the English Civil War in 1644, Rutherford mentioned "...two witnesses in Brittain",⁴⁶ a clear reference to Scotland and England. He also used the term "*Britaine*" several times in his sermon to the English House of Commons soon after the signing of the Solemn League and Covenant.⁴⁷ In his *Peaceable Plea for Paul's Presbytrie*, Rutherford described Britain as a woman in childbirth and the Solemn League and Covenant as her birth pangs. Didn't he mean then that this newborn baby was the union of the two kingdoms? Although the Civil war was distressful, the ongoing process in Britain was perceived as the Lord building "...his own Jerusalem."⁴⁸ Britain was also mentioned several times in his seminal book entitled *Lex Rex*.⁴⁹ It should be clarified here, however, that Rutherford mentioned Britain in connection to Israel, writing "..., for Israel, (for Brittain) my glory."⁵⁰ Evidently there were great expectations of Britain once it rested within a providential framework. The concept of Britain had a visionary place in the Covenanting identity, and its importance was also emphasized, particularly to an English audience.

In his sermon to the English Parliament in July of 1644, Alexander Henderson expressed the hope that after the troubled times "...all the three Kingdomes..." may worship God together.⁵¹ This idea of a united Britain in a confessional sense emerged when a Providential success was expected during the Civil War. Robert Baillie emphasized a necessary "*Union of the nations...for both of their subsistence...*" and during the tense atmosphere between the Scottish and the English Independents in the summer of 1645, he noted his interest and love for Britain and his unhappiness with "...this poor Isle".⁵² We are justified thus in saying that these statements of unity were contradicted by the realities of the division.⁵³ Nevertheless, it is evident that the Covenanting elite regarded the British agenda as necessary, and that view combined

⁴⁶ Rutherford, *Peaceable Plea* 1644, preface A3–4.

⁴⁷ Rutherford, *Sermon to House of Commons* 1644, [in the introduction] p. 2, *Sermon*, 9, 38, 39, 41, 48, 51, 55, 60.

⁴⁸ This description is from the "dedicatory" that was addressed to the Marquess of Argyll. Samuel Rutherford, *Peaceable Plea* 1644, A2.

⁴⁹ Rutherford, *Lex Rex* 1644, A3, 64, 70–71, 188.

⁵⁰ Rutherford, *Sermon to House of Commons* 1644, 43.

⁵¹ [Alexander Henderson] *A sermon preached before the Right Honorable the Lords and Commons assembled in Parliament at Margarets Church in Westminster, upon Thursday the 18 day of July, 1644: it being the day of public thanksgiving for the great mercie of God in the happie successe of the forces of both kingdomes neer York, against the enemies of King and Parliament / by Alexander Henderson*. London: Printed for Robert Bostock 1644, 2. [Hereafter Henderson, *Sermon to the House of Commons* 1644].

⁵² Public Letter April 25, 1645. Baillie II, 267; Baillie [to the Earl of Lauderdale] July 1, 1645. Baillie II, 294–295. The need for a close union was also expressed on other occasions. Baillie [to the Earl of Eglington] July 8, 1645. Baillie II, 299; Public Letter July 8, 1645. Baillie II, 302.

⁵³ William Haller, *Liberty and Reformation in the Puritan Revolution*. Columbia University Press, New York 1967, 121.

with the aspirations for uniformity in religion and church government. In this sense, as part of the reformation scheme, the Covenanters clearly identified with Protestant Britain and Britishness.

We could interpret the Covenanters' image of Britain as a uniform, reformed, godly Protestant confederation. According to this interpretation, Britain could be seen as an ideal concept, an aspiration, although there were other actual institutions or organizations that also exemplified Britishness during the Civil War period, for example the Conservators of Peace, the Westminster Assembly, and the Committee of both Kingdoms.⁵⁴ The Covenanters were apparently trying to form a unified Reformed Presbyterian Church or at least unify the features of the Protestant churches in the British Isles. As mentioned above, Alexander Henderson's view was that this goal was interconnected with keeping the peace.

The Solemn League and Covenant as a Manifestation of a British Solution

From a Scottish perspective, the Solemn League and Covenant of 1643 can be interpreted as a British agreement, particularly in regard to its aspirations. It has been called a "British Covenant", a bold vision with roots in military expediency and political pragmatism, although it certainly also included religious faith.⁵⁵ The English House of Commons had already undertaken the Protestation in May of 1641, so when this oath, that some called a "covenant", was taken for subscription by the people nationally, it enabled the Parliament to mobilize the people and even fight a civil war.⁵⁶ The English underwrote the Protestation, in which allegiance to the King was conditional, identifying more with the cause than the King's person, just as the Scottish National Covenant did. Some historians have noted this parallel.⁵⁷ The Protestation could, therefore, be interpreted as the English premise for the Solemn League and Covenant.

⁵⁴ The Committee of Both Kingdoms was set up particularly for the management of and military policy of the War to conclude the military alliance of the two kingdoms. John Adamson, "The Triumph of Oligarchy: the Management of War and the Committee of Both Kingdoms, 1644–1645." *Parliament at Work. Parliamentary Committees, Political Power and Public Access in Early Modern England*. Edited by Chris R. Kyle & Jason Peacey. The Boydell Press, Woodbridge 2002, 102, 104. See Lotte Mulligan, "The Scottish Alliance and the Committee of both Kingdoms, 1644–1646". *Historical Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 54 April 1970, 173.

⁵⁵ Edward J. Cowan, "The Solemn League and Covenant". *Scotland and 1286–1815*. Edited by Roger A. Mason. John Donald Publishers Ltd, Edinburgh 1987, 183, 192.

⁵⁶ John Walter, *Covenanting Citizens. The Protestation Oath and Popular Political Culture in the English Revolution*. Oxford University Press. Oxford 2017, 1, 4–5, 18, 261.

⁵⁷ Russell 1991, 294–295; Edward Vallance, "An Holy and Sacramental Paction: Federal Theology and the Solemn League and Covenant in England". *English Historical Review*, Volume 111, Issue 465, February 2001, 61. John Walter has mentioned several historians who have noted the resemblance between the Protestation and Scottish National Covenant. Walter 2017, 38, 44.

The Solemn League and Covenant concretely combined the two Kingdoms together into a British project, which was the goal of the Covenanting elite. The preceding oaths of loyalty, the Protestation, and the Vow and Covenant have been defined by historians as tests of political loyalty. I believe there is reason to concur with Edward Vallance's interpretation that the agreement between the English Parliamentarians and the Scottish Covenanters was also a presentation of a strong commitment that bound together the Kingdoms in a religious covenant for personal and national reformation, also the case in England. According to this particular definition, this significant agreement could be interpreted as a national covenant that related to a federal or covenanting theology that was rooted in England and New England, as well as in Scotland. Among those English who were sent to negotiate with the Scots in 1643 on the Solemn League and Covenant, there were also those who had strong New England connections, including Henry Vane.⁵⁸ It has been noted that many of the English settlers in New England actually returned to England during the 1640s,⁵⁹ so there is good reason to believe that this connection was also important for the relationship between the Covenanters and their English Parliamentary counterparts.⁶⁰

The Solemn League and Covenant has been primarily viewed over time as a political instrument by which the English Parliamentarians received military aid from the Scottish. Yet, at the time, some of the English interpreted the Solemn League and Covenant as a renewal of God's Covenant with man and England as a chosen nation.⁶¹ So, when we consider a Covenant-centred point of view, we should remember that this perspective was not exclusively a Scottish one. Most recently, Kirsteen MacKenzie has used the term "covenanted interest" in terms of the three kingdoms.⁶² It appears that in terms of a covenanting theology, there was indeed potential for great religio-political cooperation between Covenanting Protestants in a British context.

⁵⁸ Vallance 2001, 50–51, 56, 65, 74. Vallance has remarked that the Protestation, Vow and Covenant and the Solemn League and Covenant could all be seen as embodiments of one national covenant. Edward Vallance, *Revolutionary England and the National Covenant. State Oaths, Protestantism and the Political Nation, 1553–1682*. The Boydell Press. Woodbridge 2005, 59. Henry Vane had been entangled in "the Antinomian controversy" and "the Boston party" during his stay in Massachusetts Bay, and he had returned from there in 1637. Kai T. Erikson, *Wayward Puritans: A Study in the Sociology of Deviance*. John Wiley & Sons, New York 1966, 78, 85, 88, 90.

⁵⁹ Alec Ryrie, *The Protestants. The Radicals who made the modern world*. William Collins, London 2017, 142.

⁶⁰ In principle, covenanting theology and traditions were inspirations and assets to both, New England Puritans and Scottish, but the differences between the Scots and American Puritans are not clear and there is need for a further comparative study. Nevalainen 2018, 267.

⁶¹ Vallance 2001, 50–51, 56, 65, 74.

⁶² Kirsteen M. MacKenzie, *The Solemn League and Covenant of the Three Kingdoms and the Cromwellian Union, 1643–1663*. Routledge Research in Early Modern History. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, London 2018, e.g. on pp. 1–2, 8, 13, 23, 25, 36, 43–45, 48.

The political and religious spheres were clearly combined in the Solemn League and Covenant. Robert Baillie distinguished between the spheres when he wrote that the Scots desired “*a religious Covenant*” and the English “*a civil League*”.⁶³ This is an important aspect to note, as it reveals that already at the beginning of this British aspiration, there were differences on the substance of the agreement. The Scottish definition of the agreement as religious emerged from their strong identification with the Reformation of the church, and they increasingly defined the church within a British context. On the other hand, we must remember that although the League and Covenant was by definition a civil as well as a religious agreement, it was also a compromise.⁶⁴ It remained ambiguous in its details.⁶⁵ Edward J. Cowan has claimed that the inspiration for the Scottish Covenant was particularly based on Heinrich Bullinger’s idea of a “double reformation,” which includes not only a reformation of religion, but of the civil society as well. He has also noted the differences between Scottish and English institutions as problems that presented themselves as being related to the Solemn League and Covenant. Although the Covenanting tradition was also established in England, it was less so there than in Scotland. Cowan has further stated that that there could have been a union in “*a civil league*” but not in “*a civil covenant*” and that within the longer historical perspective, this ideal was “totally elusive”.⁶⁶ However, whether it is interpreted as either religious or political, as a civil covenant or a league, does not change its British dimension, particularly from the Scottish point of view.

We should also consider the ideas of Allan I. Macinnes, who has maintained that the Covenanters aspired to a “confederation throughout and beyond the British Isles,” and that they were trying to transform a regal union into a confederal one.⁶⁷ Related to this theme Macinnes has claimed that the Marquess of Argyll was “the leading British confederate” and “the chief political promoter” of the alliance and that the Covenanting elite, in particular Alexander Henderson and the seminal lawyer of Scottish Covenanters, Lord Archibald Johnston of Wariston, influenced the forming

⁶³ Baillie to Spang September 22, 1643. Baillie II, 90.

⁶⁴ Stevenson 1987, 170–171.

⁶⁵ See Lawrence Kaplan, “Steps to War: the Scots and Parliament, 1642–1643”. *The Journal of British Studies*, Volume IX, Number 2, May 1970, 63, 66.

⁶⁶ Edward J. Cowan refers to J. Wayne Baker’s *Heinrich Bullinger and the Covenant: The Other Reformed Tradition* 1980, esp. pp. 100–101. See this interpretation in Cowan 1987, 198–199, 194. See more discussion on this matter in Nevalainen 2018, 260 and 291.

⁶⁷ Macinnes 2000, 192–193. See Macinnes 2009, 138, 141–142. David Stevenson has defined this aspiration of a federal union also further as “a loose federal union”. Stevenson 1987, 163, 173, 177. Tony Claydon and Ian McBride have stated that the Covenanters were for “...a federal union of kingdoms and churches.” Tony Claydon & Ian McBride, “The Trials of the chosen peoples: recent reinterpretations of Protestantism and national identity in Britain and Ireland”. *Protestantism and National Identity: Britain and Ireland, c. 1650–c. 1850*. Edited by Tony Claydon and Ian McBride. Cambridge University Press. Cambridge 1998, 19.

of it. The Scottish inspiration for the Covenant emerged from Continental Europe, favouring Presbyterianism, while the English, who favoured independency, were influenced by North America's New England colonies.⁶⁸ Certainly, the Marquess of Argyll already mentioned the confederal aspirations during the early stages of the conflict and retained them during the difficulties with the English in 1646.⁶⁹ His British leanings and emphasis were clearly evident.

Due to the Scottish aspirations for a union of the Kingdoms, without a union of their Parliaments, the term confederal union was indeed appropriate. A federal union refers to a more modern construction of a State with a common Parliament, although a representative system of the states within that federation is possible. In any case, from the Scottish point of view, this aspiration for the union was a British one, and there is thus reason to examine this discussion of a union between Scotland and England in more depth and with a special interest in and focus on the above-mentioned covenant traditions.

It is clear that the Covenanting principles, God, the chosen people, King and freedom as connected to Reformation, which herein is combined together as the Covenanting schema,⁷⁰ were extended to the British and also on an international level. It is agreeable that the Scottish and the English were inspired by different features of tradition and that they had different interpretations of the Solemn League and Covenant. It is also important to note here that the Scottish interpretations of the League as a covenant included God as an active partner in the commitment, which entailed that Christian duties and obligations were indissoluble by any temporal authority. More broadly, the dynamic feature in both Calvinism and Puritanism, as linked to Protestant Providentialism, encouraged the activity of the people in the world of politics.⁷¹ My opinion is that there is a clear reason to refer to Max Weber's idea of "inner-worldly asceticism" being connected to this activity in society as an obligation.⁷² This point is important, especially when we consider the Covenant as the basis of the Covenanting identity, from which the Scottish defined the significance of the Solemn League and Covenant. One line of interpretation concerning their failure, however, is their lack of a common sense of Britishness with the English. This point needs to be discussed further.

⁶⁸ A British confederate label is also apparent in the very name of his book in Macinnes 2011, 7, 160–161.

⁶⁹ *An honourable speech made in the Parliament of Scotland by the Earle of Argyle (being now competitor with Earle Morton for the chancellorship) the thirtieth of September 1641. Touching the prevention of nationall dissention, and perpetuating the happie peace and union betwixt the two kingdomes, by the frequent holding of Parliaments.* London: Printed by A.N. for I.M. at the George in Fleetstreet, Anno 1641, 4; Argyll's Speech 1646, 4.

⁷⁰ Nevalainen 2018, 62, 81, 82, 95, 133, 134, 139, 145, 281, 287, 298, 299 and 349.

⁷¹ Vallance 2001, 51; Walter 2017, 253–254, 258.

⁷² Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion*. Translated by Ephraim Fischhoff. Fourth edition, paperback. Beacon Press, Boston 1969, 166–168. See Nevalainen 2018, 219–220, 230–232.

Analysis of the Solemn League and Covenant as a British Document

There is a reason to take a closer look at the text of the Solemn League and Covenant when considering the aspirations of the Covenanting elite within this British project, and also examining the possible facets of an embryonic British identity in that document. First, we should note that the Solemn League and Covenant, due to its textual implications, strived in principle for a greater unification between the three Kingdoms of Scotland, England, and Ireland. However, there are no direct literal references to Britain. Also, the insignificance of Ireland is evident because only two Kingdoms are mentioned as the supreme judiciaries used to punish opponents and establish peace between the Kingdoms as settled in the Parliaments.⁷³ Ireland was clearly deemed as dependent on England, and its Parliament had no role to play in the League.⁷⁴ There is reason also to maintain that this covenant was essentially a commitment between Scottish Covenanters and English Parliamentarians, although it was formally intended to include Ireland. Yet, the reason that Ireland is included is understandable, when we remember the aforementioned threat that the Irish Catholic rebellion posed to the British Protestants. The League and Covenant illuminates the transnational dimensions of the Covenanting identity, as the Scots evidently insisted on this document, and the integrative themes that were already seen in the negotiations of 1641 continued in it as well.

The Solemn League and Covenant was divided into six main parts or aspirations. The first concerned the reformation of and uniformity in religion in all three Kingdoms, "...according to the word of God, and the example of the best Reformed Churches;..." This quote was interpreted differently by the Scottish and the English. The second aspiration dealt with the threat of Catholicism and its extinction, consequently including episcopacy, "...Heresy, Schism, Prophanesse." The third part established the important "...rights and priviledges of the parliaments, and Liberties of the Kingdoms;"⁷⁵ and the fourth concentrated on the punishment of "incendiaries..." in the Kingdoms. The fifth aspiration was to endeavour to find a firmer peace and union between Scotland and England. The sixth and the last part of the Covenant put emphasis on the solidarity and cohesion that was still required to avoid division in this united cause.⁷⁶ In the summer of 1644 Alexander Henderson seemed to recognize the dangers of division due to envy and national differences, so he emphasized the importance of the Solemn League and Covenant as a solution

⁷³ The Solemn League and Covenant 1643. *Source Book of Scottish History*, Volume 3. Edited by William Croft Dickinson & Gordon Donaldson. Second Edition. Thomas Nelson and sons Ltd, London 1961, 122, 124. [Hereafter *The Solemn League and Covenant 1643*].

⁷⁴ MacKenzie 2018, 12–13.

⁷⁵ *The Solemn League and Covenant 1643*, 122–123.

⁷⁶ *The Solemn League and Covenant 1643*, 123–124.

to these dangers.⁷⁷ Indeed, the threat of discord and disunity in this British solution proved to be the main problem for the aspirations of the Covenanting elite.

In the League and Covenant of 1643, there were several bonds. The Covenant was defined first as a covenant with God and secondly as one with the people of God. Thirdly, it was characterized as a covenant for reformation, and fourth, it sought the preservation of the King and the superiors.⁷⁸ From a Covenanting point of view then, the religious basis of this alliance was insurmountable, but when Alexander Henderson used the Scottish experience as an example, he referred to the law of necessity. The Solemn League and Covenant represented a political means to rescue England and Ireland from their “*calamities*”, but it was also intended for the preservation of the Scottish Kirk and Kingdom and the safety of all three Kingdoms, as well as the King. Its necessity, as Henderson summarized, emerged from “... *Nature, Religion, Loyalty, and Love*”.⁷⁹ The grounds for the alliance and covenant were displayed as being fundamental to life itself. The Covenanters’ identification with British cooperation also seems to have been necessary for many outcomes, not the least of which was for security.

There are plenty of parallels between the Solemn League and Covenant and the Scottish National Covenant of 1638. In addition to the vital relevance of the Reformation cause, perhaps the most important parallel from a Covenanting point of view was uniting the interests of the King and of Parliament in the text. Although the Covenanters’ alliance with the English opposed the Royalist war efforts, the Solemn League and Covenant mentioned among other points “...*the advancement of...the Honour and Happinesse of the Kings Majesty and his Posterity,*” the privilege of the Parliaments, and defending “...*the Kings Majesty’s Person and Authority,*...”⁸⁰ These statements reveal the royalist features of the Covenanting identity, and in this case those of the Parliamentarian cause as well. Yet, in *Lex Rex*, Samuel Rutherford notes the King’s breach of the Covenant in England as the reason why the Scottish

⁷⁷ Henderson, *Sermon to the House of Commons* 1644, 16–17.

⁷⁸ This is apparent in the speech of Alexander Henderson at the establishment of the Solemn League and Covenant. *The Covenant with a Narrative of The Proceedings and Solemn Manner of Taking it by the Honourable House of Commons, and Reverent Assembly of Divines the 25th day of September, at Saint Margarets in Westminster. Also Two Speeches Delivered at the same time; the one By Mr. Philip Nye, The other by Mr. Alexander Hendersam*. Printed for Thomas Vnderhill at the Bible in Wood-Street. London 1643, 27. [Hereafter Henderson, *Speech delivered at the oath taking of the Covenant* 1643].

⁷⁹ Henderson, *Speech delivered at the oath taking of the Covenant* 1643, 29–32. Also Robert Baillie referred to the Solemn League and Covenant as a rescue mission for England. Baillie to Spang, September 22, 1643. Baillie II, 83, 90, 100.

⁸⁰ *The Solemn League and Covenant* 1643, 122–123. Compare the combined meaning of the authority of the king and the parliament between with the Scottish National Covenant, February 27, 1638. *The Constitutional Documents of the Puritan Revolution 1625–1660*, Selected and edited by Samuel Rawson Gardiner. Third edition, revised. London 1962, 130–131.

came to the aid of the Parliamentarians, as they were obliged to compel the King to keep his covenant.⁸¹ Their commitment to the relevancy of the monarchy, no matter how ironic it was in this particular context, was in line with the Covenanters' strong identification with their king.⁸² This commitment turned out to be crucial during the tiresome quarrels over the ultimate fate of Charles I in 1646 and 1647. The hope of reconciliation with a covenanted king seemed to be increasingly hopeless.⁸³

The Westminster Assembly as a British Organization

From the Covenanters' point of view we can interpret the Westminster Assembly of the English Church, and perhaps the entire British vision of the 1640s, as a part of the Reformation scheme. At the end of 1643, Alexander Henderson addressed the House of Commons and emphasized the importance of the Westminster Assembly in completing the religious Reformation in England; however, he also discussed how this text had already been successful in Scotland.⁸⁴ His perception that the Scottish Kirk was more reformed and ideal than its English counterpart is indeed very evident. That the Scottish Kirk should be used as a model for a reformed Britain was apparent. In using the Scottish reformed Church system as an example for the Westminster Church Assembly to attain religious uniformity in the three Kingdoms, the unifying British ecclesiastical objectives were clearly outlined. In 1644 there was definitely a plan to unify the Church of England with other Reformed churches.⁸⁵ In reference to Lord Wariston's views, Robert Baillie mentioned that "...*Covenanted Uniformitie*"

⁸¹ Rutherford, *Lex Rex* 1644, Question XL, 400.

⁸² I have studied the Covenanters' deteriorating image of King Charles I in Nevalainen 2018, 63–96.

⁸³ *Mr. Henderson's first paper for His Majestie* June 6, 1646. *Certaine papers, which passed betwixt his Majestie of Great Britaine, in the time of his being with the Scottish army in New-Castle. And Mr. Alexander Henderson concerning the change of church government. Anno Dom. 1646.* Haghe: Printed by Samuel Broun, English booke-seller dwelling in the Achterom, at the signe of the English Printing House, M. D. C. XLIX [1649], 8–9; Baillie to Henderson May 19, 1646. Baillie II, 373; Baillie to Spang April 3, 1646. Baillie II, 363–364; Baillie to Mr. Robert Blair August 18, 1646. Baillie II, 389–390; Baillie for William Murray September 8, 1646. Baillie II, 394. Allan Macinnes has also noted the opposition of King Charles to a covenanted monarchy as a conundrum to the Covenanters. Macinnes 2009, 143.

⁸⁴ [Alexander Henderson], *A sermon preached to the honourable House of Commons, at their late solemne fast, Wednesday, December 27. 1643. By Alexander Henderson, minister at Edenbrugh. Published by order of the House.* London: Printed for Robert Bostock, dwelling at the signe of the Kings-head in Pauls Churchyard, 1644, 20.

⁸⁵ In 1644 they published a book regarding reformation in Scotland. *Reformation of church-government in Scotland cleared from some mistakes and prejudices by the commissioners of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, now at London / published by especiall command by the Commissioners of the Generall Assembly of the Church of Scotland at London.* Printed by Ewan Tyler, Printer to the Kings most Excellent Majesty. Edinburgh 1644, 1, 20–21.

in relation to the Anglo-Scottish Solemn League and Covenant.⁸⁶ Strictly speaking, the Scottish commissioners were not members of the Westminster Assembly and “Covenanted uniformity” has been used historically to describe the Scottish style of uniformity and the belief in “the oneness of the Church”.⁸⁷ It is not difficult to see that the Scots saw themselves as instruments in advancing this unified British aspiration with which they so strongly identified. However, the problems of this effort surfaced quite early.

Robert Baillie, one of the Scottish commissioners, wrote about the increased tensions in the Westminster Assembly. His remarks on the proceedings are both diverse and revealing.⁸⁸ It appears that the battle lines in ecclesiastical matters between the Covenanters and English Independents were drawn in 1644. In his letter of 1644, Samuel Rutherford states that these “*friends, even gracious men*” hindered work. Of the Independents, he mentioned Thomas Goodwin and Jeremiah Burroughs, who opposed the Presbyterian government.⁸⁹ Of the clergy, Robert Baillie also mentioned Thomas Goodwin, Marshall and Nye, and of the politicians, Lords Say, Wharton, and Vane.⁹⁰ It could be considered important that Henry Vane was also defined as opposing the Scottish views. Baillie also referred to “*Erastian lawyers*” and the delay of the Reformation and united the destiny, misery, and welfare of England and Scotland to other Reformed churches as well.⁹¹ Though the Covenanters did have some allies among the English Parliamentarians and in the Westminster Assembly, these allies were not strong enough.

On the other hand, as Chad van Dixhoorn has noted, the major problem was the “troubled marriage between the assembly and parliament” and that for the majority of the gathering there was a vision of the Reformed church and a Presbyterian determination to persuade the House of Commons to adopt a system of ecclesiastical discipline that was free of secular control.⁹² Kirsteen MacKenzie has also stressed the Presbyterian majority in Westminster Assembly, although the Independent challenge

⁸⁶ Public Letter August 18, 1644. Baillie II, 220.

⁸⁷ Robert S. Paul, *The Assembly of the Lord. Politics and Religion in the Westminster Assembly and in the ‘Grand Debate’*. T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh 1985, 441, 437–438, 456.

⁸⁸ Baillie to Spang 26, April 1644. Baillie II, 169; Baillie to D. Dickson September 16, 1644. Baillie II, 230.

⁸⁹ Rutherford for the Right Honourable Lady Boyd May 25, 1644. *Letters of Samuel Rutherford*, 542.

⁹⁰ Public Letter September 16, 1644. Baillie II, 228; Baillie to Spang October 25, 1644. Baillie II, 236–237.

⁹¹ Baillie [to the Earl of Lauderdale] July 1, 1645. Baillie II, 294–295; Baillie to George Young October, 1645. Baillie II, 320; Baillie to Spang September 5, 1645. Baillie II, 315.

⁹² Chad van Dixhoorn, “Politics and religion in the Westminster assembly and the ‘grand debate’.” *Insular Christianity. Alternative models of the Church in Britain and Ireland, c. 1570–c. 1700*. Edited by Robert Armstrong and Tadhg O Hannrachain. Manchester University Press, Manchester 2013, 130, 138, 142.

on the “covenanted interest” did emerge during the course of their activities.⁹³ William Haller has claimed that the advance of Oliver Cromwell’s army meant the defeat of the Westminster Assembly in the sense that the Assembly could not have, even with the assistance of the Parliament, enforced any of the acts put forth by the Presbyterians.⁹⁴ These points reveal one of the major obstacles to the work of the Assembly of Divines and consequently also to the progress of the British agenda that the Covenanting elite aspired to have. Related to the supposed Presbyterian features and, on the other hand, the Erastian emphasis on the English Parliament, we must face the problem of the meaning of “English Presbyterians” or the lack of actual support for Presbyterianism in English society.⁹⁵ This important theme of the English Presbyterianism and the Puritan inclinations with the Scots is indeed worth a separate discussion that is not feasible within the limits of this article.

Conclusion: The Covenanters’ Vision for a United Britain – An Unrealized Ideal

The Covenanters’ vision of a reformed, confederal and covenanted union was an unrealized ideal. Compared to the views of the English Parliamentarians this ideal has been a less interesting subject for most historians. When we discuss collective identities in the context of different historical periods, we commonly refer to the actualized ideas of the winners, and the ideology of those winners dominates the historical view of that particular period. In discussing the collective identity of the Scottish Covenanters, the Scottish aspirations were, in the end, on the losing side. Some historians have noted the importance of aspirational ideals, as they relate to the concept of a Protestant national identity of a chosen nation in the British context in the eighteenth century. However, the gap between the ideal and the reality has been mentioned in only a prescriptive and dynamic sense.⁹⁶ These ideas are important and the results of my studies agree with that argument. The Scottish experience as

⁹³ MacKenzie 2018, 24, 36, 39, 43, 46, 47.

⁹⁴ Haller 1967, 341.

⁹⁵ See Nevalainen 2018, 260–261, 262, 265.

⁹⁶ Tony Claydon and Ian McBride have written about an “unrealised objective” as an important factor in identity construction, particularly concerning the aspiration for a “truly protestant nation”. Claydon & McBride 1998, 27–28. More generally, Quentin Skinner has discussed the importance of studying the relationship between principles and political actions, related to motives and rationalizations of behavior. Quentin Skinner, *Liberty Before Liberalism*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1998, 105–106. Hilary Larkin has referred to the idea of identity as an aspiration and the importance of imaginary and ideals instead of hard facts. Hilary Larkin, *The Making of Englishman. Debates on National Identity 1550–1650*. Studies in the History of Political Thought. Series editors: Terence Ball, Jörn Leonhard & Wyger Velema. Brill, Leiden 2014, 8, 129, 293–294.

a chosen people, which encouraged the Scottish actions, served as dynamic tension in creating the aspirations for a British Protestant union. In an aspirational sense, it is indeed historically useful to discuss a British Protestant identity in terms of the Scottish Covenanters.

The Covenanting elite was constructing a sense of British identity for their own reformatory and unifying purposes, which at first were only their reactions to a threat. Yet, one of the actual problems that the Scottish commissioners faced was that there was no unified vision for the 1643 Covenant with the English. Nevertheless, they tried to cooperate in constructing a unified Presbyterian church in the Westminster Church Assembly in London. Although the idea of a confederal union was not actualized in the political sense, it did serve as an effective force that was used to change the then military and political situation in the British Isles. Still, the actual consequence of their course of actions was an English republic and the Cromwellian Union; not the union that the Covenanters desired and sought so hard to achieve.

Abstract

This article concentrates on the British dimension of the collective identity of the Scottish Covenanting elite, from 1637 to 1647. The main arguments are that the Scottish Covenanters were defending first and foremost the Protestant reformation and liberty they perceived to be under threat. To defend these fundamentals, a reformed and covenanted British union was needed. For the Covenanting identity, the ideas of solidarity and interdependency between Scotland and England were displayed in a quest for unity in religion, but also desire to conserve a lasting peace. These ideas, and particularly their providentially inspired aspirations, interrelated with the international reformation scheme and also tried to communicate a strong sense of British identity. A Protestant reformed Britain was seen as an ideal that penetrated a sense of national identity.

It is obvious that the ideology of the winners dominates the historical view of those time periods, and the Scottish aspirations were, in the end, on the losing side. Yet, the Scottish Covenanters' ideals stimulated and triggered a process that was a revolutionary and English-driven one, not the British one that the Scottish were striving to have. In this sense the importance of the Scottish unrealized ideal union is essential to study as the English did have to deal with and respond to the Covenanters' aspirations and challenge.