

# The Scottish Covenanters and the Beginnings in Ulster

## I. The Covenanters in Scotland

### A. Background (1600s)

1. Stuart Dynasty in Scotland
  - a. After 1603 ruled Scotland and England
  - b. Never committed to Presbyterianism
  - c. Sought “divine right” kingship
  - d. Conflict: Episcopacy vs. Presbyterianism → “No bishop, no king”
2. English Civil War/Wars of the Three Kingdoms (1639-51)
  - a. Provoked by Charles I & Archbishop William Laud
    - 1) Scotland: Attempted to impose a prayer book & liturgy
    - 2) England: angered Parliament and the Puritans
  - b. Led to Scottish Covenants
    - 1) National Covenant (1638): declared the freedom of the church & upheld Protestantism & Presbyterianism
    - 2) Solemn League and Covenant (1643)
      - a) Basis of alliance w/ England
      - b) Resulted in Westminster Assembly
  - c. Ended w/ rule of Oliver Cromwell
3. Issues for Covenanters
  - a. Leading Tenets (Douglas): Headship of Christ ...
    - 1) In the state
    - 2) Over the individual Christian
    - 3) In the church of God
  - b. Reformed principles
    - 1) Oppose the authority of civil powers in spiritual matters
    - 2) Affirm equality of all ministers
  - c. Stressed religious liberty
    - 1) Although no side was tolerant
    - 2) Covenanters → Democratic but intolerant
4. Representative: Samuel Rutherford and *Lex Rex*

### B. Restoration of Stuarts (1660)

1. Charles II comes to the throne
2. Stuart motivations: revenge & conformity
3. Worship not drastically changed
4. But govt. of the church was changed, notably imposing bishops
5. Expelled at least 1/3 of ministers for not conforming

### C. Covenanter Struggle

1. Covenanter’s Situation
  - a. Professed adherence to National Covenant to defend the church
  - b. Motto: “For Christ, His Crown, His Covenants”
  - c. Even armed rebellion by some Covenanters, although unsuccessful
2. Practices
  - a. Open air meetings with pastors (refused submission to bishops)
  - b. Underground “conventicles”

3. “Killing time” (1680-88): Killing of many Covenanters—time of violence, guerilla warfare
  4. Cameronians: staunchest or most extreme Covenanters
- D. Glorious Revolution (1689) and Aftermath
1. James II/VII replaced by William and Mary
    - a. Ends persecution
    - b. Abolishes episcopacy
    - c. Establishes Presbyterian Church in Scotland & Westminster Standards
  2. Ongoing Problems
    - a. Lay patronage—lay landowners (i.e., landlords) presenting candidates for pulpits and often forcing them in (i.e., through General Assembly) over protests of congregation and presbytery
    - b. Many Covenanters (e.g., Cameronians) rejected William as “un-covenanted” king  
→ Reformed Presbyterians
- II. Ulster (Northern Ireland)
- A. Early Irish/Celtic History
1. Birth of the Celtic Church
    - a. Relative isolation of Ireland a factor in early development
    - b. Patrick of Ireland
      - 1) Youth in Roman Britain, enslaved to Ireland
      - 2) Escaped only to return as missionary
      - 3) Only limited information—two writings
      - 4) Cannot be proved “Catholic” by surviving evidence—but be careful of “Protestants before Protestantism”
      - 5) Simpler worship & missions oriented but still a monk
    - c. Columba & Iona: Scottish island that Columba set up as a center to evangelize Scotland & England
  2. Taming of the Irish Church
    - a. Synod of Whitby (663): Brought English church into conformity with Roman practice
    - b. English conquest: Synod of Cashel (1172) brought Celtic church into conformity and under church in England
- B. Reformation Era
1. Change in Political Outlook
    - a. Protestantism heightened English-Irish conflict
    - b. Ireland was technically Anglican (Church of Ireland)
    - c. Leading Irish Anglican: James Ussher, Archbishop of Armagh
  2. Ulster Plantation
    - a. Policy of James I
    - b. Attempt to pacify Ireland by settling Scottish Presbyterians in Northern Ireland
  3. Beginnings of Irish Presbyterian Church
    - a. “Eldest daughter” of Scottish Presbyterian Church
    - b. Key Events
      - 1) Six Mile Water Revival (1625)
        - a) Foundations of a presbytery
        - b) Evangelical, revival emphasis

- 2) Battle of the Boyne, July 1, 1690
  - a) William III defeats James II
  - b) Allows formation of Synod of Ulster
- c. Becomes a “national church,” not an official “state church”
- d. Significant American immigration from Ulster