



Chapter from Book

THE IDEA OF THE COVENANT IN SCOTLAND

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Abstract

The words "Covenant" and "Covenanter" are so prominent in Scots Church History that it seems justifiable to bring together some information as to the history of the idea of the Covenant in Scotland. There has been a natural tendency to let imagination and sentiment influence the interpretation of events and documents, so that we have such volumes as John Lumsden's *The covenants of Scotland* (1914), where the title with its implications is bestowed upon a whole series of bands, confederacies, contracts, obligations, protests, leagues, pledges and promises from the year 1556. Some of these were at least in part of spiritual import, involved solemn oaths, and were formally subscribed as in the presence of God; but it does not appear that the word "Covenant" was explicitly used before the beginning of 1596, and the reading back of the conception into an earlier period of Scotland's national religious history must be considered misleading. One of the most interesting of the early historic agreements was the "common band" of 3rd December 1557, by which some leading laymen promised before God that they would "with all diligence continually apply our whole power, substance, and our very bodies, to maintain, set forward and establish the most blessed Word of God and his Congregation, and shall labour to our possibility to have faithful ministers purely and truly to minister Christ's evangel and sacraments to his people".

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