



# SCOTLAND THE NATION

## A Christian Case for Independence

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### About This Pamphlet

This pamphlet from Christians for Independence (CFI) shows the Biblical and historical justification for claiming Scotland to be a nation, and demonstrates to Christians of all denominations how support for Independence is compatible with the core Christian beliefs of justice, compassion and love.

It is available in this format as a 10 page pdf document at [www.christiansforindependence.scot](http://www.christiansforindependence.scot) and is also available as a 36 page, A6, booklet at a cost of £2.50 plus p&p, although the cover price is waived for voluntary organisations.

The pamphlet was compiled by a team (see page 9) from Christians for Independence (CFI) and edited by Dave Thompson, former MSP and founding member and Convener of CFI.

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## FOREWORD

**by Owen Dudley Edwards**

It's a great honour to present Christians For Independence and their booklet, Scotland the Nation, which unites two cherished beliefs. We believe in Our Lord Jesus Christ, the carpenter from Galilee, Who gave His life for us two thousand years ago, and Whose sayings and doings recorded in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John inspire us forever.

We learn from many of our fellow-Christians across the two millennia, respect the martyrdom of many of them, and repudiate the persecutions to which some of them subjected others. We abominate the cruelty of Christians who persecuted our spiritual parents the Jews, and our spiritual cousins the Muslims.

As a Roman Catholic I rejoice in the Church of Scotland whose courage and vision opened its Assembly Hall on the Mound in Edinburgh to the Constitutional Convention whence came the Scottish Parliament, and which housed that Parliament in its early days. We are deeply grateful for the many people who lead Christian lives without realising that they are Christians. Jesus taught us that our greatest duties are to love God above all things, and to love our neighbours as ourselves.

As believers in Scottish Independence we want to give our love to humankind, such as by welcoming immigrants, refugees, asylum-seekers, of all races and kinds to our country and doing what we can to help them. We thank God for our country and we know that an independent Scotland will give us a better chance to do God's work than a UK still trying to prove itself a great empire, keeping weapons of mass destruction, which must certainly have no place in an independent Scotland.

We will proudly retain and guard the good work of the UK, above all in the National Health Service which has served us so well for over 70 years and whose ideals are still maintained so well by our nurses, doctors, paramedics, cleaning and catering staff, technicians, scientists and pharmacists.

We will do all in our power to preserve and protect the planet God has given us and which humankind has driven to the edge of destruction. And we ask you to join us in the pursuit of independence the better to do God's work.

# INTRODUCTION

by Neil D M MacLeod

I am delighted to introduce this helpful booklet as there are so many ways in which Scottish life has been shaped through our shared history of Christianity. It was through the prism of biblical Christianity that Scotland saw the importance of education and democracy in public life. Such radical ideas were formed from the Bible's view that we are made in the image of God and that we reflect what the Word of God says about God. We are made to be in community, to communicate, and to worship. We see these traits in ourselves, in our desires, in whatever is the most important thing in our life. Our mooring as a nation is inextricably linked to our Christian history.

There have been times when we have been overzealous, times when we have got things wrong. However, the great message of Christ Jesus is that when we take responsibility for ourselves and seek forgiveness, we will know His grace; He will cleanse our souls, and stand us on firm ground to give us hope and a future. The Scots have a remarkable place in the history of the world. Since the time of Columba and Ninian, Scotland has been rooted in Christianity. In 1320 we produced the Declaration of Arbroath, asserting our right to nationhood and the sovereignty of the people under God. In 1638 in the National Covenant, we again expressed our nationhood under God. In our 1689 Claim of Right we removed a king who refused to recognise that Christ was head of the Church.

In the Disruption of 1843, we disputed the State's right to interfere in the Scottish Church and in the 1950s and 1980s we again expressed our nationhood and right to self-determination through the Scottish Covenant and the Campaign for a Scottish Assembly. A silver thread connects all these documents and actions, through which our national identity was expressed.

My own denomination, the Free Church of Scotland, was born out of the 1843 Disruption, which insisted that churches, not the State, should choose their own minister, the biblical view being that church and state have their own spheres of authority. This is an important idea within our national identity. Although the old Scots Parliament was abolished in 1707, one part of it remained: The General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. Into its area of authority, the State could not tread, even though it was fully part of the parliamentary process of the pre-Union Scotland.

Post-Union it became the crucible through which issues of vital importance were debated on a national stage and the General Assembly Hall also became the temporary home of the new Scottish Parliament in 1999. There are parts of Scotland that have an uneasy relationship with our Calvinistic heritage, and yet this shared history is something which has promoted our internationalism. John Knox, for example, developed close ties with France, Switzerland and Germany, and was ordained and ministered in England.

At the heart of his Calvinism was a desire for ordinary people to take responsibility for themselves. Obviously, that was principally regarding the claims of Christ, but it also applied to areas of work, family life and community. The Scots were known for their Calvinistic ethic: of hard work, discipline, and attention to detail. This ethic changed Scotland and the world.

Scotland's rich Christian heritage and recognition of the role of Christ's church, with a sovereign people who take responsibility for their decisions, present the world with an example of what a modern nation state should be like. My desire for my country is that it may also reflect the character of God: compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love. A country with those characteristics is one I want to live in.

# Scotland the Nation

## A Christian Case for Independence

### Overview

Scotland has long been considered a Christian Nation which values hospitality, compassion and social justice. But is there a Christian case for supporting Scottish Independence? Christians for Independence (CFI) believes that the answer is an emphatic YES and that Christians have a major role to play in shaping Scotland's future.



*The Scottish Parliament Mace*

The words inscribed on the mace in the Scottish Parliament are **Wisdom; Justice; Compassion; Integrity**. Words appropriate to a time of which writer and artist, Alasdair Gray, memorably wrote, *"We should work as if living in the early days of a better nation."*

Important aspects of the Christian message are love, hope and peace which work for the Common Good of all people, not just the few, and which recognise the inherent dignity of every human being.

Even economist, philosopher and author, Adam Smith, "the father of capitalism", stressed that *'No society can be flourishing and happy of which the far greater part of the members are poor and miserable'*.

Of course, many Christians assist the poor through charitable giving which is a good thing in itself. However, the Christian message also requires society as a whole to take responsibility for social justice for all and, as post war Prime Minister Clement Attlee said, *'Charity is a cold, grey, loveless thing. If a rich person wants to help the poor, they should pay their taxes gladly, not dole out money at a whim'*.

Christians can contribute a unique perspective to the creation of that better, more compassionate nation through our worldview, derived from the Bible, which is a treasure-store of divine wisdom and blessing for the world and its peoples through its stories and narratives.

Other worldviews, such as Atheistic Materialism, New Age thinking and Postmodernism, seem to hold sway in today's society to an excessive degree but it cannot be denied that the Bible is full of cries for justice and concern for the poor.

## Nationhood – A Short History

The existence of nations and their relationships, both internal and external, is woven into the very fabric of the Biblical narrative, as is the promise of the blessings that follow when nations listen to, and obey, the Word of God.

It can reasonably be argued that the first clear statement of the identity of the nation of Scotland was in the Declaration of Arbroath in 1320, with the 700<sup>th</sup> anniversary on 6 April 2020.



DECLARATION OF ARBROATH

FOR AS LONG AS BUT A HUNDRED OF US REMAIN ALIVE,  
NEVER WILL WE ON ANY CONDITIONS BE BROUGHT  
UNDER ENGLISH RULE.  
IT IS IN TRUTH NOT FOR GLORY, NOR RICHES,  
NOR HONOURS THAT WE ARE FIGHTING  
BUT FOR FREEDOM —  
FOR THAT ALONE WHICH NO HONEST MAN GIVES UP  
BUT WITH LIFE ITSELF.

APRIL 6<sup>TH</sup>. 1320

This declaration was in the form of a letter in Latin from the Scottish Barons to Pope John XXII calling on him to recognize Scotland's identity and long history as a separate kingdom under its own King and calling upon the Pope to reject the King of England's claims for feudal overlordship.

Although history is important in setting out the context and background to Scotland's nationhood we must remember that we, including our forebears and offspring, are all equally brothers and sisters in Christ and each generation has to discover for itself the promise, the love and the reality of God.

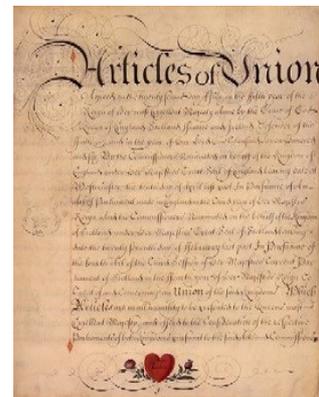
No nation can, however, define itself today on the basis that at some time or another its leaders proclaimed that nation's identity in Christian terms as a member of a community of Christian nations – Christendom.

While Scotland shared a Monarch with England after 1603, which at times had a big influence on Scottish politics and external relationships, it was only after 1707 that the political union of the United Kingdom of Great Britain was formed. That was when, in theory at least, both the Scottish and English parliaments were replaced by the parliament of Great Britain.

The UK is not, however, a nation. The UK is a union of nations. The fact that Scotland was guaranteed its own established church of Scotland (the Kirk) and legal system in the 1707 Treaty of Union cemented Scotland's position as a continuing nation, recognized even by England with whom the treaty was signed.



Duke of Queensberry presents Act of Union to Queen Anne



The Declaration of Arbroath



General Assembly of the Church of Scotland

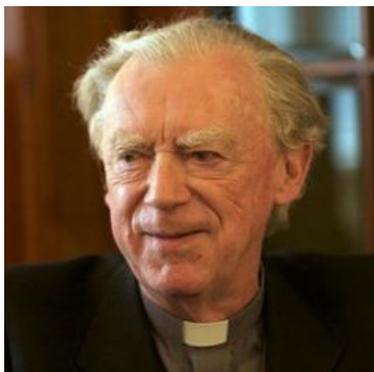
Most Church structures also point to Scotland as a separate entity with the Church of Scotland being within the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, the Catholic Church having the Scottish Bishops' Conference and the Scottish Episcopal Church being an independent Anglican province.

In addition, the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland acted as the de facto Scottish Parliament, discussing and deliberating on matters pertaining to the Scottish nation from 1707 until the reconvening of the Scottish Parliament in 1999.

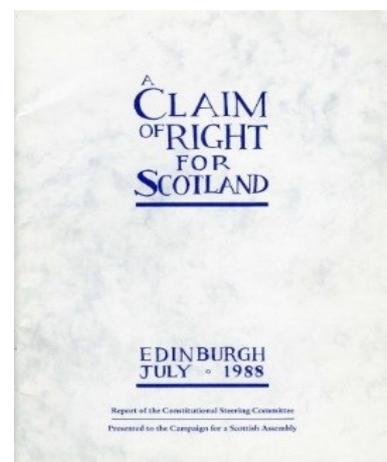
## The Claim of Right

In 1989 the Scottish Constitutional Convention, which was an association of political parties, members of parliament, councils, churches, trade unions and other civic groups, was established when they all signed the Claim of Right, crafted by the Campaign for a Scottish Assembly in 1988, which stated:-

*“We, gathered as the Scottish Constitutional Convention, do hereby acknowledge the sovereign right of the Scottish people to determine the form of government best suited to their needs, and do hereby declare and pledge that in all our actions and deliberations their interests shall be paramount”.*



*Canon Kenyon Wright,  
Chair of Scottish Constitutional Convention*



The Claim of Right was also endorsed with a vote both in the Scottish parliament, in 2012, and in the Westminster parliament, in 2018.

## Nationhood Today

As Christians professing our faith in post Christendom Europe, we have to look beyond the experience of the people of God in Scotland alone. Perhaps we need to return to the Biblical model of the people of God as salt or as light in a corrupted and dark world? Clearly, we have to abandon the idea of Christendom, and of Scotland as a Christian nation in a family of Christian nations and turn to a model of Scotland as a nation in which Christians live whose citizenship is with God, but who live on this earth as pilgrims and sojourners demonstrating that the Kingdom of God can leaven society.

Rather than being comfortable and at ease in our nation we, as Christians, are called to live in tension and as good neighbours. We are called to proclaim possibilities and challenge conformity. Christians are called by God to proclaim the possibilities of a transformed, redeemed world where justice, righteousness and mercy abound like a river that never runs dry, which is summed up in Jesus' command: *"Love your neighbour as yourself."* [Matthew 22:39]

We are also called to minister to all who are in need, seeing our ministry as being to Jesus himself. His Gospel words make this clear:



Something that should not need to happen on the streets of a wealthy country

*"For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me. Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord when was it we saw you hungry and gave you food or thirsty and gave you something to drink?.....' And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.'"* [Matthew 25:35-40]

We are called to be in this world, but not of this world, to be God's agents in such a transformation.

We must strive for this world to reflect the love of Jesus, to be a world where the hungry are fed, where the thirsty are filled, where strangers and asylum seekers are welcomed, where the naked are clothed, where the sick are cared for, where justice prevails and where creation is protected.

## An Independent Nation

Where does all of this leave us in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century when the world is in turmoil and norms appear to be being overturned wherever we look? Is the status quo as part of the UK the best place for the modern Nation of Scotland?

In this context the possibilities of an Independent Scotland, making its own decisions, need to be proclaimed. Decisions based on Love, Hope and Peace. Decisions based on Hospitality, Compassion and Social Justice. Decisions based on Wisdom, Integrity and the Stewardship of Creation.

It is our firm belief that by making such decisions itself, an independent Scotland will not only be a nation *'more comfortable in her own skin'* but also a better neighbour to England, Wales and Northern Ireland.



*Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees*

These are not specifically “Christian” aspirations.

Many of our aims, such as alleviating poverty and feeding the poor, providing adequate healthcare, housing and education for all, and our other demands for a just and fair society are shared by people of goodwill, whatever their ethnic, philosophical, religious or ethical background or professed worldview.

The freedoms that Independence would give us to pursue our own decisions on the future of our nation and our position in the wider world are significant. Decisions on issues currently reserved to Westminster like our constitution, defence, nuclear weapons, foreign policy, NATO, broadcasting, trade and industry, employment, energy, economic policy, monetary policy, immigration, social security, pensions and telecoms.



Independence would give us the power to decide for ourselves on full membership of the European Union (EU) or membership of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) which includes Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland.

EFTA is in the European Economic Area (EEA) which allows free trade and movement of people with the EU without full membership and with exemption from the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) and Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).



The government of a nation of 5.5 million is also, inevitably, much closer to the people it serves and is, therefore, much easier for the people to influence, as our experience since the formation of the devolved Scottish Government has shown, with it leading the way on matters like climate change and social justice.

MSPs are also very easy to get hold of at Holyrood. Many events are held there every week with participation by folk from all over Scotland and all walks of life.



*The Scottish Parliament*



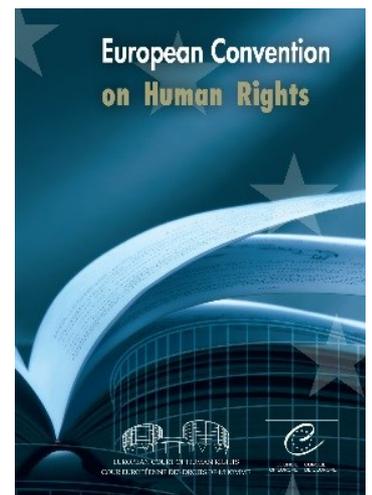
In this respect the constitution of an Independent Scotland will be extremely important and an idea of what that would look like is contained in *“The Scottish Independence Bill – A consultation on an interim constitution for Scotland”* which was published in 2014.

This bill, if enacted, would have formed the interim Scottish Constitution which would have operated in the event of a YES vote in 2014, until a Constitutional Convention produced a permanent written constitution.

It is interesting to note that this interim constitution includes a commitment to embedding the sovereignty of the people within Scots Law, challengeable within the courts. What a contrast to the unwritten, precedent-driven ‘so-called’ constitution of the UK which has been shown to be so wanting in recent times.

This draft interim constitution also provides that every person in an independent Scotland will have the rights contained in the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) which was agreed by the countries of Europe in 1950, following the Second World War, to protect fundamental freedoms which are the foundation of justice and peace in the world.

Among those fundamental freedoms are *“Freedom of thought, conscience and religion; Freedom of expression; and Freedom of assembly and association”*.



Christians will have a great interest in such a constitution and Christians for Independence will ensure active engagement in its composition when the time comes.

Fundamentally, we as Christians called by Christ to proclaim his Gospel, though often divided by tradition and history, are united by the call of the Living Lord to be His people and to witness to the realities and challenges of the Kingdom into which He has called us and which is finally still to come.

Let us pray that God’s Kingdom may come in Scotland and let us make Scotland’s voice heard!

## Prayer for our Nation

*Almighty God, we bring to you the nation of Scotland.*

*We remember our historic record of seeking to be a kingdom which reflects your Kingdom. We acknowledge our failures both as a community and as individuals, and seek your forgiveness.*

*At this time give to us, both as a nation and as individuals, the spirit to seek to restore this nation as a people of justice and of love, where in showing care for the ecological integrity of Your world and concern for the welfare of all Your people, we may know a rebirth of our nation among the nations of the world, to the blessing of all people and the glory of Your Name.*

*This our prayer we make in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ who called St Andrew to His service and who continues to call us to do His will. Amen.*

## Acknowledgements

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## Christians for Independence

CFI was founded in 2009 as an organisation for people from all branches of the Christian Church who believe that Scotland should be independent. We believe that independence will give Scotland the opportunity to build the fair, compassionate and inclusive society which we as Christians would like to see in our country.

Please join us in our campaign:

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