

A PRESBYTERIAN POLITICAL MANIFESTO: PRESBYTERIANISM AND CIVIL GOVERNMENT

by Michael Wagner

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Michael Wagner has a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) degree and a Master of Arts degree in political science from the University of Calgary. His Master's thesis entitled *Private Versus Public Education: The Alberta Debate in the 1980s* is also available from Still Waters Revival Books. Wagner has begun work on his Doctorate at the University of Alberta, and currently resides in Edmonton with his wife and three children.

CITATIONS

The system used for citations in this paper follows the *Style Manual for Political Science* published by the American Political Science Association (1993). In the text of the paper, a citation includes the last name of the cited author, followed by the date of his work, and then the page number or numbers used. To find the title of the work cited, go to the References section at the end of the paper. Locate the author's last name and the date that corresponds to the one in the citation, and you will find the specific work cited. For example, the citation "(M'Crie [1821] 1989, 162)" refers to page 162 in M'Crie's book *Unity of the Church* which was originally published in 1821, and republished in 1989. Where the author's name is not between the citation brackets, his name had just been referred to previously in the text and should therefore be obvious.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION (p. 1 in "bound photocopy" edition)

CHAPTER 2 - ESTABLISHED RELIGION: AN INESCAPABLE CONCEPT (p. 3)

CHAPTER 3 - THE BIBLICAL CASE FOR AN ESTABLISHMENT OF RELIGION (p. 6)

CHAPTER 4 - RELIGIOUS LIBERTY, TOLERATION, AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF CHRISTIANITY (p. 11)

CHAPTER 5 - CONCLUSION (p. 18)

References . . . 20

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

For the last two decades or so there has been an apparent increase in the amount of conservative Christian political activism in North America. Many evangelicals and fundamentalists who had previously shunned politics began to see the necessity of political participation in order to prevent the encroachment of the state upon their legitimate activities, such as Christian education, or to prevent national sins, such as legalized abortion.

Undoubtedly, this Christian political activity is a positive development in Canada and the United States. More Christians are taking their biblical social responsibilities seriously. But Christian political activism also raises important

questions. Is the ultimate political goal of Christians simply to achieve certain conservative government policies, or is something more needed for a completely biblical agenda? Every true Christian can agree on policy outcomes such as eliminating abortion, stopping the homosexual agenda, and protecting parental rights in education, but is that all we can gather from the Scriptures as to God's will for civil government?

The learned men who wrote the Westminster Confession of Faith spelled out the basic biblical position on civil government. The "civil magistrate" (i.e., any power-wielding government official such as an elected politician or an unelected judge) is a minister of God (Romans 13:4). He must reward good and punish evil. How is such a person to distinguish "good" from "evil"? By God's authoritative Word, the Bible. Government officials must rule in accordance with the Bible. To put it in different words, Christianity must be the established religion of any society that wants to please God.

But to say that God requires societies to be governed according to the Bible raises further questions. Who should interpret the Bible for the civil authorities? Many different groups of conservative Christians have irreconcilable interpretations of the Bible. For example, some professing Christians are completely opposed to capital punishment for any crime, whereas others support it as the just punishment for not only murder, but other crimes as well. Which interpretation is true?

In order to resolve this problem a Christian state must be more than Christian in a broad sense of endorsing a general concept of biblical Christianity. It must be Christian in a specific sense; it must have a confession of faith that sets out its theological understanding of the Scriptures and how to interpret them.

It is this author's settled conviction that the Westminster Confession of Faith is the most accurate and thoroughgoing account of the doctrines of God's inerrant Word, and is therefore the most reasonable choice for a Christian state to adopt. It is the contention of this paper that the historic Presbyterian view of the necessity for the establishment of Presbyterianism as the official religion of every society is the Scriptural view, and it is the task of this paper to demonstrate that truth to the current generation of Christians.

CHAPTER 2

ESTABLISHED RELIGION: AN INESCAPABLE CONCEPT

For most modern North Americans it seems that "religion" is looked upon as some sort of a hobby in which one may or may not participate at his leisure. Many would view themselves as having little or nothing to do with religion. "Religion is something in which other people are involved as a private endeavour. It is mostly harmless as long as it remains a private matter." But if people are openly motivated by religious concerns in their public affairs, politics in particular, religion is then thought to have intruded into a "secular" area from which it should be forbidden.

This view, however, displays a marked ignorance of what religion really is. The term "religion," in its most meaningful sense, actually refers to the underlying beliefs that everyone has about the meaning of life. In this way it is clear that all people hold to some form of religion. Paul Marshall has explained it well.

Religion refers to the deepest commitment and deepest identity of a person or group. Hence, the opinion that one may discuss constitutions, politics, education, or sex without any reference to God is as much a religious view as the opinion that we are responsible to God in all we do. An expanded concept of religion allows us to take account of the fact that our lives reflect and are rooted in a particular view of the meaning of life: of the nature of society; of what human beings really are; and of their essential responsibilities, whether to self, society, or another source (1992, 6).

Thus religion is an inescapable aspect of life. Everyone has a religious viewpoint whether they acknowledge it or not. Man is a religious being.

The fact that man is a religious being is very significant for politics and government. Every aspect of life is infused with religious meaning. Each person's views about the origin and purpose of government are fundamentally based on some religious perspective. Human societies are characterized by a common religious foundation which provides cohesion and a basis for law. R.J. Rushdoony has done much to bring this to light.

Every state is a law order, and every law order represents an enacted morality, with procedures for the enforcement of that morality. Every morality represents a form of theological order, i.e., is an aspect and expression of a religion. The church thus is not the only religious institution; the state also is a religious institution (1986, 7).

It is very important to understand, as Rushdoony points out, "that in any culture the source of law is the god of that society" (1973, 4). This is closely related to the fact that "[b]ecause law governs man and society, because it establishes and declares the meaning of justice and righteousness, law is inescapably religious, in that it establishes in practical fashion the ultimate concern of a culture" (Rushdoony 1973, 4). It is clear, then, that not only is religion relevant for issues of law, politics, and government, but it cannot be separated from them. Every society has a religious basis, and cannot exist without that specific religious basis. "Since the foundations of law are inescapably religious, no society exists without a religious foundation or without a law-system which codifies the morality of its religion" (Rushdoony 1973, 5).

The result of this significant insight is that "every state or social order is a religious establishment" (Rushdoony 1986, 7). In other words, "no disestablishment of religion as such is possible in any society" (Rushdoony 1973, 5). Hence the question is never "Should we have an established religion, or not?"; rather, the question must be "Which religion should be the established religion?" We cannot escape the fact that our society, and every other society, has always had, and will always have, an established religion, whether implicitly or explicitly. The liberty and prosperity that we still (decreasingly) enjoy are residuals from an implicit Christian foundation that is quickly being eroded and replaced by the religion of secular humanism.

Once it has been demonstrated that every society has an established religion, it should not be necessary to ask any Bible-believing Christian which religion should be established. Obviously Christianity is the only acceptable choice because it is the only true religion. Since as Christians we are to be honest, there is no reason why we should shy away from being explicit about the necessity of a Christian establishment. However, since there are so many sects that go by the term "Christianity," we need to define the "brand" of Christianity that is to be established. Our society cannot rest on an ambiguous concept of Christianity. As Rushdoony, again, writes, "[e]very social order rests on a creed . . . The life of a society is its creed" (1968, 219). Thus a creed giving the best expression of the Christian faith is an indispensable document for an explicit establishment of Biblical Christianity.

The idea of having a creed that is very specific and well-defined in terms of the type of Christianity it expresses sounds very narrow and exclusive, and it is. Assuming it is a very Biblical creed, such as the Westminster Confession of Faith, it excludes all erroneous and heretical conceptions of Christianity. This is important with regards to political matters. By having a general and ambiguous creed, it would be less clear how God's Law is to be interpreted for application in the social and political realm. If a dispensational interpretation of the Law was accepted by the state, virtually all of the benefits of having a Christian establishment would be nullified. Other theological persuasions would also be disastrous for a true Christian state. With the Westminster Confession of Faith as a guide to interpreting the Scriptures, the civil authorities would be able to act according to the will of God in political matters, rather than according to the subjective opinions of men.

The Westminster Confession of Faith is completely Biblical. "For fidelity to Scripture, for 'logical fearlessness and power,' for 'theological comprehensiveness, and intellectual grandeur,' it is second to none" (Tallach 1980). Unfortunately, this paper is not the place to go into a comparative Biblical analysis of various creeds and confessions. However, those who investigate the matter seeking to please the Lord alone, will find that the Westminster Confession is the most Biblical. For expositions of the Confession, see Shaw ([1845] 1980) and Williamson (1964). Interestingly, the Assembly that wrote the Confession was called together by a civil government for the express purpose of composing a creed that would be used not only by the church, but also by the state. For more information on this see Hetherington ([1856] 1991, 122ff).

CHAPTER 3

THE BIBLICAL CASE FOR AN ESTABLISHMENT OF RELIGION

Philosophical considerations alone should not be considered sufficient to prove that an establishment of religion is a moral obligation. For Christians only the Bible can be accepted as the foundation for any belief, not only those beliefs related to "spiritual" matters, but also those related to political issues. The critical question, then, for Christians is, "Does the Bible teach the necessity of the establishment of the Christian religion?" The Bible does indeed demonstrate the need for an establishment of Christianity, and the Old Testament in particular provides the Biblical basis for the concept of an established church. In Old Testament times there was a pervasive cooperation between church and state, and that pattern was not abrogated in the New Testament.

In the New Testament the passage with the most explicit teaching on civil government is probably Romans 13. In that chapter it is explained that political rulers "are ordained of God" (v. 1); "they are God's ministers" (v. 6) who must reward good and punish evil (vv. 3-4). This raises an important question: by what standard is the ruler to distinguish "good" from "evil"? Clearly, that standard can only be the Bible. How can rulers be God's ministers and yet not rule according to God's will? In other words, Romans 13: 1-6 teaches not only that God has instituted civil government, but also that the rulers must govern according to the Word of God. The Bible is not only the exclusive rule of faith and practice for the church, but also for the state. With the Bible being the standard for the civil authorities, it is unmistakable that Christianity is the foundation of the law order, i.e., the established religion in this sense. Romans 13, then, at least in a general way, teaches the necessity of the establishment of Christianity.

At this point it is important to be more specific about what is being proposed as the Biblical concept of established religion. The Bible teaches a cooperation between church and state that has been variously called the "Scottish Theory of Ecclesiastical Establishments" (Smeaton 1875), the "Establishment Principle" (Brown n.d., 1), and other similar terms.

The Establishment Principle, or the Principle of the National Recognition of Religion maintains the scriptural view of the universal supremacy of Christ as King of Nations as well as King of saints, with the consequent duty of nations as such, and civil rulers in their official capacity, to honour and serve Him by recognising His Truth and promoting His cause (Brown n.d., 1).

As William Cunningham explains it, "an obligation lies upon nations and their rulers to have respect, in the regulation of their national affairs, and in the application of national resources, to the authority of God's word, to the welfare of the church of Christ, and the interests of true religion" ([1882] 1991a, 391). What is being maintained here is that the true church of Christ, and the civil authorities (both in submission to their common Lord) have as their goal the promotion of God's glory and true Christianity, and that they should work together for the promotion of this common goal. On the one hand, they should be allied together, but on the other hand, they should remain completely sovereign in their respective jurisdictions.

Although this form of the establishment of Christianity is not explicitly laid out in the New Testament, Symington finds the basic principle for it in Ephesians 1:22.

Does not the apostle Paul speak of God having put all things under the feet of Christ, and 'given him to be Head over all things to the church?' Mark the language. It is not only 'Head over all things;' but 'Head over all things to the Church.' It is for the sake of the Church that he is invested with universal regal authority: in other words, the end of Christ's universal Mediatorial dominion is the good of the Church. Thus far, all is clear and undeniable. But the nations are among the 'all things,' over which Christ is appointed 'Head.' It follows, then, that Christ is appointed Head over the nations for the good of the Church. If so, there must be some way in which the nations are capable of subserving the interests of the Church. Is it possible, then, to conceive that it is not the duty of the nations to promote, by every means in their power, the good of the Church? Is it conceivable that nations are not under obligations to advance the very end for which they are placed in subjection to Christ? Believe this who can ([1884] 1990, 266).

More specifically, however, the Biblical basis for the alliance between church and state is found in the Old Testament. As Smeaton notes, the Biblical authority for the Establishment Principle "will be found in the provisions of the Jewish Establishment, the existence of which, by Divine appointment, is conclusive as to the lawfulness of this arrangement" (1875, 7). The fact that so much of the detail for this arrangement is based on the Old Testament should not concern any Reformed Christians. Reformed theology recognizes the continuing validity of Old Testament laws and principles that have not been abrogated by the New Testament.

We must assume continuity with the Old Testament rather than discontinuity. This is not to say that there are no changes from Old to New Testament. Indeed, there are -- important ones. However, the word of God must be the standard which defines precisely what those changes are for us; we cannot take it upon ourselves to assume such changes or read them into the New Testament. God's word, His direction to us, must be taken as continuing in its authority until God Himself reveals otherwise. This is, in a sense, the heart of "covenant theology" over against a dispensational understanding of the relation between Old and New Testaments (Bahnsen 1985, 3).

With this being the case, those who would argue against the Establishment Principle must show how the type of relationship which existed between the church and state in Old Testament Israel can no longer be a proper pattern because of changes made in the New Testament. This is not to suggest that a Christian society will simply be a carbon copy of Old Testament Israel. Rather, it is the underlying principle of a cooperative relationship between church and state that is still applicable. As M'Crie points out, those who claim that the Jewish Establishment "was altogether peculiar and inimitable do err, as well as those who hold that it is in all respects a model for Christian nations" (1871, 127). He suggests that there is a "golden mean" between these two positions.

Those who have read the Old Testament are well aware of the close connection between the Israelite church and state. Symington points out that

at every stage of the Jewish history we meet two distinguished characters, the one civil and the other sacred, acting together a conspicuous part, and exhibiting the most perfectly harmonious co-operation. Such were Moses and Aaron, Joshua and Eleazar, David and Abiathar, Solomon and Zadok, Hezekiah and Azariah, Zerubbabel and Joshua ([1884] 1990, 272).

Of course, there are many more specific Scriptural examples of the alliance between church and state in the Old Testament. Those who would like a detailed study of this relationship should read Aaron's Rod Blossoming by George Gillespie ([1646] 1985). It is sufficient for this paper to acknowledge the general principle of cooperation between those two institutions.

It is a striking fact, in confirmation of the views already laid down, that the only form of civil polity ever framed and established by God Himself should stand markedly in connection with the Church of God; and that although many of the circumstances attending the alliance of Church and state among the Jews were peculiar to that people, yet the alliance itself cannot be regarded as ceremonial or peculiar, but must be held as intimating the Divine will as to the lawfulness of such a connection. Add to this fact that, beyond the case of the Jews, we have express support, and otherwise, to the Church of God by heathen magistrates, and the deed so done sanctioned by the approbation of God. Still further, this evidence of the Divine sanction given to the support and recognition of the Church by the state might be very greatly augmented by a consideration of those predictions in regard to the future or millennial state of the Church, in which kings and kingdoms are especially represented as in the latter days bringing their gold and their honour unto it, and becoming the great instruments of promoting its spiritual interests. Nor is the doctrine of the duty of the state to recognise and aid the Church invalidated by the absence of an express command in the New Testament Scriptures, confirmatory of the duty as announced in the Old. On the contrary, the absence of an express prohibition repealing the law, and superseding the principles acted on in Old Testament times, is the strongest of all evidence that the doctrine and duty remain the same as before (Bannerman [1869] 1991, 133).

Such is the thrust of the Biblical argument for the Establishment Principle.

It should be again noted that the Establishment Principle does not in any way allow for either the church or state to be in authority over the other in their respective God-given domains. The state cannot interfere in the affairs of the church, and the church cannot interfere in the affairs of the state. Thus each institution remains sovereign over the area granted to it by the Lord Jesus Christ. However, Gillespie notes that in very extraordinary circumstances, very extraordinary measures are called for. For example, if the church was to turn completely away from God "and their [sic] being no hopes of redressing such enormities in the ordinary way, by intrinsic ecclesiastical remedies" then "the Christian magistrate may and ought to interpose his authority to do divers things which, in an ordinary course of government, he ought not to do" ([1646] 1985, 82). There are a number of examples where various kings of Israel took the lead in reforming the church to turn it back to God. As John Knox concludes after examining the reformations wrought by King

Hezekiah and King Josiah, "it is evident that the reformation of religion in all points, together with the punishment of false teachers, doth appertain to the power of the civil magistrate" ([1558] 1994, 90).

It is also important to note that the Establishment Principle does not lead to the creation of a totalitarian system. Although this will be dealt with more fully in the next chapter, a quotation from Symington expresses the point here very well.

It is quite a mistake to say, that the magistrate's giving his countenance to one set of religious opinions in preference to others, involves the essence of persecution. This arises from supposing that, when the government of a country expresses its approbation of a certain doctrinal creed and form of worship, it must forth with enjoin on all its subjects conformity in their opinions and practice, and authoritatively require the subjects to believe as the rulers believe. But does this follow? The legislature does not, in any sense, dictate to the subject what his religion shall be. It only determines what system of religious belief shall be taught with the aid and countenance of the state. No means but what are moral are employed to bring the public mind into conformity with that of the rulers. Every man is left, as far as civil authority or legal coercion is concerned, to choose or reject as he sees fit. The conscience of every individual is left free and unfettered; no one has the slightest ground on which to set up the cry of persecution ([1884] 1990, 288- 289).

The fear that some may have that the Establishment Principle will lead to a totalitarian government is therefore unfounded.

As has been shown in this chapter, the Establishment Principle is simply the Biblical pattern for church-state relations when both church and state are determined to serve the Lord. But it inevitably raises concerns about "liberty of conscience" and "toleration". Therefore these concerns are dealt with in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

RELIGIOUS LIBERTY, TOLERATION, AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF CHRISTIANITY

As one would expect, the idea of an established religion automatically raises the question of other religions and dissenting beliefs. Would people of other religions or different Christian sects be allowed to freely exercise their beliefs? Since political beliefs are fundamentally based on religious beliefs, this question also applies to political ideas. Although advocates of the Establishment Principle might have some small differences among themselves regarding the degree to which liberty would be allowed, there is a basic principle upon which all would agree.

That principle is best summarized in the Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 20, "Of Christian Liberty, and Liberty of Conscience." Section 4 reads,

And because the powers which God hath ordained, and the liberty which Christ hath purchased, are not intended by God to destroy, but mutually to uphold and preserve one another; they who, upon pretence of Christian liberty, shall oppose any lawful power, or the lawful exercise of it, whether it be civil or ecclesiastical, resist the ordinance of God. And for their publishing of such opinions, or maintaining of such practices, as are contrary to the light of nature, or to the known principles of Christianity, whether concerning faith, worship, or conversation; or to the power of godliness; or such erroneous opinions or practices, as either in their own nature, or in the manner of publishing or maintaining them, are destructive to the external peace and order which Christ hath established in the church; they may lawfully be called to account, and proceeded against by the censures of the church, and by the power of the civil magistrate.

All sound Christians recognize that the civil government must govern according to the Word of God. God is the one who determines what are crimes and what are not. Many crimes are actions by people against other people. But it must also be recognized that the Scriptures teach that the civil government must also punish crimes that are committed against God, and against a law order based on God's Word. Thus idolatry and blasphemy are crimes as much as murder or theft. All 10 commandments, not just those that deal with interpersonal relations, are to be enforced by the state.

Although idolatry appears to be a crime that is committed exclusively against God, it is not. Since a Christian society would be based upon belief in the true God and His Word, idolatry actually undercuts the basis of a Christian society.

Basic to the health of a society is the integrity of its foundation. To allow tampering with its foundation is to allow its total subversion. Biblical law can no more permit the propagation of idolatry than Marxism can permit counter-revolution, or monarchy a move to execute the king, or a republic an attempt to destroy the republic and create a dictatorship (Rushdoony 1973, 38-39).

Aside from the philosophical argument, there are explicit Scriptural prohibitions against idolatry, and explicit punishments for those who lead others away from the true God.

It should be noted that Deuteronomy 13: 5-18 does not call for the death penalty for unbelief or for heresy. It condemns false prophets (vv. 1-5) who seek to lead the people, with signs and wonders, into idolatry. It does condemn individuals who secretly try to start a movement into idolatry (vv. 6-11). It does condemn cities which establish another religion and subvert the law-order of the nation (vv. 13-18), and this condemnation must be enforced by man to turn away the judgment of God (v. 17) (Rushdoony 1973, 39).

No Christian government can ignore what the Bible says regarding what might be termed "religious crimes". This part of God's Law is just as authoritative as the parts that deal with crimes of people against other people. As Samuel Rutherford puts it, the civil ruler is "to preserve both tables of the law" ([1644] 1982, 142), i.e., all ten of the commandments (Exodus 20: 1 - 17; Deuteronomy 5: 6 - 21).

It should also be pointed out that the section of the Westminster Confession quoted above was written specifically to counter abuses concerning "liberty of conscience." True Presbyterians have always defended every person's liberty of conscience. But here the Confession states that liberty of conscience cannot be used as an excuse to oppose "lawful power" and to disturb "the external peace and order" of the church. Liberty of conscience does not override the obligation to obey authorities acting according to God's Word. "He who is the Lord of the conscience has also instituted the authorities in Church and State; and it would be in the highest degree absurd to suppose that he has planted in the breast of every individual a power to resist, counteract, and nullify his own ordinances" (M'Crie [1821] 1989, 162).

Nevertheless, there will likely be those who will allege that the Confession is here granting the civil government almost unlimited power to oppress and persecute its citizens. Some will maintain, "whenever government officials discover anyone who makes statements with which they disagree, the police will be sent out and those persons will be silenced." In other words, the Confession is basically advocating a totalitarian state. However, this is not, in fact, the kind of state power for which the Confession is calling. The Scottish theologian, Thomas M'Crie, gave a clear exposition of this section of the Confession, in response to the type of criticism mentioned above. The following lengthy quotation will lay that criticism to rest.

Now, this does not say that all who publish such opinions and maintain such practices (as are here mentioned) may be proceeded against, or, punished (if the substitution of this word shall be insisted for) by the civil magistrate; nor does it say, that any good and peaceable subject shall be made liable to this process simply on the ground of religious opinions published and practices maintained by him. For, in the first place, persons of a particular character are spoken of in this paragraph, and these are very different from good and peaceable subjects. They are described in the former sentence as "they who oppose lawful power or the lawful exercise of it," and "resist the ordinance of God." The same persons are spoken of in the sentence under consideration, as appears from the copulative and relative. It is not said, "Any one for publishing," etc., but "they who oppose any lawful power, etc. for their publishing," etc. In the second place, this sentence specifies some of the ways in which these persons may become chargeable with the opposition mentioned, and consequently "may be called to account;" but it does not assert that even they must or ought to be prosecuted for every avowed opinion or practice of the kind referred to. . . . For, be it observed, it is not the design of the paragraph to state the objects of church censure or civil prosecution; its proper and professed object is to interpose a check on the abuse of liberty of conscience as operating to the prejudice of just and lawful authority. It is not sin as sin, but as scandal, or injurious to the spiritual interests of Christians, that is the proper object of church censure; and it is not for sins as such, but for crimes, that persons become liable to punishment by magistrates. The compilers of the Confession were quite aware of these distinctions, which were then common. . . . To render an action the proper object of magisterial punishment, it is not enough that it be contrary to the law of God, whether natural or revealed; it must, in

one way or another, strike against the public good of society ([1821] 1989, 163-164).

Chapter 20 of the Westminster Confession is a statement promoting the Christian doctrine of "liberty of conscience" and section 4 was not included to cancel out the rest of the chapter. The Confession does genuinely allow for liberty of conscience. But liberty of conscience is not absolute. Just as the state has limitations placed on its authority and power, so also the individual has limitations placed on his promotion of opinions and practices. As Bannerman states, the object of the Confession's "authors was accomplished in announcing the general doctrine that there are such limits, and that there are such opinions and practices; thereby contradicting the mischievous tenet, that conscience is a plea sufficient against the lawful exercise of all authority whatsoever" ([1869] 1991, 184). However, "[w]here those limits are to be laid down, it is not at all the object of the Confession to say. At what point the plea of conscience ceases to avail against the interference of authority, whether civil or ecclesiastical, our Confession does not profess to determine" (Bannerman [1869] 1991, 184).

That the Confession's authors felt it necessary to write out a statement expressing the limitations on liberty of conscience is understandable considering the historical situation in which they lived. At the time, England was experiencing a civil war and certain sectarian groups were using "liberty of conscience" as a slogan to advocate various forms of lawlessness.

The Sectararies who during the civil wars used the watchwords of "liberty of conscience" and "universal toleration," in behalf of views which the authors of the Westminster standards felt bound to oppose as in the highest degree destructive of civil and ecclesiastical order, may be divided into four classes: 1. Those who "pretended liberty of conscience" against all Church authority, -- such as the Brownists, who held that no man should be brought under Church discipline or excommunicated for any action or opinion in behalf of which he could urge that plea. 2. Those who "pretended liberty of conscience" against all civil authority, -- such as the Fifth Monarchy men, who demanded universal community of goods and levelling of ranks, and "the world to be put under the feet of the saints." 3. Those who "pretended liberty of conscience" against the practical authority of the law of God, -- such as the Antinomians, who maintained that the moral law was buried in the grave of Christ, and was no longer binding upon a Christian man as a rule of duty. 4. Those who "pretended liberty of conscience" against the authority of God as a standard of belief conveyed to us in the Scriptures, -- such as the Libertines, who asserted that all opinions were alike innocent, if only held conscientiously (Bannerman [1869] 1991, 182-183).

These views were expressed in "dangerous and often most blasphemous and repulsive forms" thus making it necessary for the Confession's authors to strongly oppose such a false use of "liberty of conscience". The demand for "toleration" was closely linked with the concept of "liberty of conscience" at the time the Confession was being written. In discussing "toleration" as the sectarians defined it, Hetherington gives a description not unlike the quote from Bannerman above.

As used by those military sectarians, the meaning of the term ["toleration"] was, that any man might freely utter the ravings of his own heated fancy, and endeavour to proselytise others, be his opinions what they might, -- even though manifestly subversive of all morality, all government, and all revelation. Such a toleration, for instance, as would include alike Antinomians and Anabaptists, though teaching that they were set free from and above the rules of moral duty so completely, that to indulge in the grossest licentiousness was in them no sin; and Levellers and Fifth- Monarchy Men, whose tenets went directly to the subversion of every kind of constituted government, and all distinctions in rank and property. This was what they meant by toleration, -- and this was what the Puritans and Presbyterians condemned and wrote against with startled vehemence ([1856] 1991, 154).

By understanding what the Confession's authors were up against at the time of the Assembly, we can more accurately discern the meaning they intended for Section 4 of Chapter 20.

It should be clear now that under a Presbyterian Establishment there will be some form of liberty of conscience, namely, that which is stated in Chapter 20 of the Westminster Confession of Faith. Liberty of conscience is limited, and cannot be used to justify the promotion of idolatry or wickedness. Hetherington summarizes the presbyterian understanding of liberty of conscience this way:

The Word of God, in almost innumerable instances, commands the direct encouragement of truth, and also

the suppression of certain forms of error, -- as of idolatry and blasphemy; but gives no authority to man to judge and punish errors of the mind, so far as these amount not to violations of known and equitable laws, and disturb not the peace of society ([1856] 1991, 330).

With regards to "errors of the mind," William Cunningham too writes that "civil rulers . . . must not inflict upon men civil pains and penalties, -- fines imprisonment, or death, -- merely on account of differences of opinion upon religious subjects" ([1882] 1991b, 562). Robert Shaw agrees with this as well.

All sound Presbyterians disclaim all intolerant or compulsory measures with regard to matters purely religious. They maintain that no man should be punished or molested on account of his religious opinions or observances, provided there is nothing in these hurtful to the general interests of society, or dangerous to the lawful institutions of the country in which he lives ([1845] 1980, 210).

And Thomas M'Crie also points out that in discharging their duties the civil rulers will not be "compelling their subjects to believe or practice what they do not believe or judge sinful" and will not be "punishing persons who may conscientiously dissent from the authorised and established religion, or depriving them of their natural rights merely on this ground" (1871, 83). He adds that rulers are not "warranted forcibly to impose a profession of faith upon their subjects, or to oblige them to worship God in a certain mode, under civil penalties to be inflicted upon all who dissent or refuse compliance" (1871, 148).

Presbyterianism is Biblical Christianity, and a Presbyterian civil government will be nothing more than civil government conducted strictly according to the Bible. Thus justice will be defined by God and guided by the Scriptures. Those "religious crimes" which God says must be punished, will be punished, and in the way God stipulates. However, this does not mean that people will be forced to believe in God and proper doctrine. The Bible also limits the power of the state in dealing with unbelievers. Just as "strangers" were allowed to live under the civil government of Old Testament Israel, so also they will be allowed to live in a society under true Presbyterian civil government. Rushdoony describes the situation of the stranger.

God's law repeatedly refers to the stranger and requires particular recognition of their [sic] freedom. They are not to be oppressed, and discrimination against them is forbidden. "One law shall be to him that is homeborn, and unto the stranger that sojourneth among you" (Ex.12:49). This law was given to Israel in Egypt, before their departure, to stress the fact that justice is without respect of persons. The protection of the law must extend to aliens: "Ye shall have one manner of law, as well for the stranger, as for one of your own country: for I am the LORD your God" (Lev. 24:22; Num. 15:15,16). Racial or national differences could not be used to bar aliens from knowledge of God's law, nor from the Passover (Num.9:14; Deut. 31:10-12; Josh. 8:34f.). Because the foreigner, if not seeking admission into the covenant, had another religion, he was not required to abide by the ritual laws the covenant requires. He could enter into long-term debt, for example (Deut.15:3; cf. 23:21), and disregard the dietary laws (Deut. 14:21). The foreigner could not ascend Israel's throne (Deut. 17:15). However, his status was that of a privileged guest (1986, 63).

Since the strangers were under the exact same law as the Israelites themselves, and were yet allowed to live in the land while not being believers, it is clear that the enforcement of God's Law by the civil government cannot and will not lead to the extermination of non-Christians. Sure there are limitations on liberty of conscience, but there are also limitations on the state.

This can best be summed up with another quotation from Bannerman.

The truth is, that those two ordinances of God -- that of civil authority on the one side, and that of conscience on the other -- cannot be inconsistent with or destructive of each other. They are designed for concert and co-operation, not for conflict or mutual destruction. Those disciples of toleration who would plead liberty of conscience as an argument to justify resistance to civil authority in its lawful exercise, are wrong. Those disciples of despotism who would plead the authority of civil government in order to set aside or overbear the rights of conscience, are equally wrong. Civil government on the one hand, and conscience on the other, are alike ordinances of God, and were appointed to act in harmony with each other; and that they may act in harmony, they must limit each other. Civil authority is not absolute or unlimited; for there is a point where in its exercise it meets with the rightful domain of conscience; and the sword ought to be sheathed, and to give way before the claims which conscience pleads. Conscience, on the other hand, is not

absolute or unlimited either; for there is a point where its rights are met and bounded by the rights of civil authority ([1869] 1991, 168- 169).

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

It is hoped that this paper has demonstrated the necessity of the establishment of Christianity in general, and presbyterianism in particular, as the official religion of every society. Every society is based on an established religion, and therefore Bible-believing Christians must, of course, advocate that true Christianity be the established religion in whichever country they live. To not advocate the establishment of the one true religion is a violation of the first commandment as it applies to the state (cf. Westminster Larger Catechism questions 103-105). Furthermore, Christianity must be defined in order to distinguish it from the many "Christian" sects that offer erroneous alternatives to true Biblical Christianity, i.e., Presbyterianism. The Scriptures also give us a pattern of church-state cooperation that is not only still valid, but represents the only pattern for civil government that has been endorsed by God Himself. However, fears that this would involve the creation of a totalitarian state are unfounded. The state is obligated to enforce the Law of God and cannot go beyond that Law since it is limited by the very Law that spells out its responsibilities.

Undoubtedly, the Establishment Principle is a very foreign and unsettling concept for the modern mind. Even among Bible-believing Christians, the idea of a separation of church and state is adhered to strongly. Yet this paper represents an appeal to go back to Scripture to see what type of relationship God requires between these two institutions. Both church and state are ordained by God to serve Him and promote His glory. They are to work together to achieve those ends.

It is not likely that the ideas promoted here will become widely acceptable in the near future. They are too foreign to the predominating viewpoints of modern times. But some words from Gary North are appropriate here.

I am not writing a manifesto to be used in today's elections. I am writing a manifesto for the more distant future. I realize that a Christian politician or activist who is living on this side of the looming crises, and on this side of the great work of the Holy Spirit, will probably prefer to disassociate himself from these sentiments (1989, 658).

In time, when the millennial blessings spoken of in the Scriptures come to pass, the Establishment Principle will once again become the basis of Christian concepts of civil government. Hopefully this paper will, in some small way, contribute to making the Establishment Principle acceptable again.

In the immediate future, Christians should be concerned about the issues that are currently facing our nations. Although the Establishment Principle is very important, it is not part of today's political discourse, and will not be until more Christians begin to see its necessity. In the meantime, political activism must continue to be directed to the pressing issues of the day. Greg Bahnsen made an important comment regarding the theoretical aspects of Scriptural teaching on political matters and the imperative of dealing with current issues. When asked "Should we execute idolaters?", he responded,

The prima facie understanding of the biblical texts would seem to support the justice of punishing idolatry, even today. But I have not done sufficient homework and reflection on this question. Instead of talking about these theoretical things, we should work to end the slaughter of unborn children, our nation's widespread sexual perversion, and the state's continual intrusion into our lives by, for example, its stealing of our property and intervention in Christian schools. Let us talk to each other about these immediate, real situations first of all. As time goes on, we should together exegete key biblical passages about other important social problems. Killing idolaters is not the agenda (1989, 268).

Theoretical matters are important; indeed, this paper is about the "theory" of Christian civil government. But it is also true that Christians should be dealing with contemporary issues such as the ongoing murder of unborn children. Even more importantly, Christians need to ensure that their own children are receiving a Christian education. Only by raising godly families and evangelizing the lost will the foundation be laid for the future reconstruction of civil government along Biblical lines.

May God be glorified, even in discussions about His will for politics and civil government!

References

- Bahnsen, Greg L. 1985. *By This Standard*. Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics.
- Bahnsen, Greg L. 1989. "Questions Addressed to Greg L. Bahnsen." In *God and Politics*, ed. Gary Scott Smith. Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company.
- Bannerman, James. [1869] 1991. *The Church of Christ*. Vol. 1. Edmonton, Alberta: Still Waters Revival Books.
- Brown, C.J. N.d. *Christ's Kingship Over the Nations*. Gisborne, New Zealand: Westminster Standard.
- Cunningham, William. [1882] 1991a. *Historical Theology*. Vol. 1. Edmonton, Alberta: Still Waters Revival Books.
- Cunningham, William. [1882] 1991b. *Historical Theology*. Vol. 2. Edmonton, Alberta: Still Waters Revival Books.
- Gillespie, George. [1646] 1985. *Aaron's Rod Blossoming*. Harrisonburg, Virginia: Sprinkle Publications.
- Hetherington, William M. [1856] 1991. *History of the Westminster Assembly of Divines*. Edmonton, Alberta: Still Waters Revival Books.
- Knox, John. [1558] 1994. "The Appellation of John Knox from the cruel and most unjust sentence pronounced against him by the false bishops and clergy of Scotland, with his supplication and exhortation to the nobility, estates and commonalty of the same realm." In John Knox *On Rebellion*, ed. Roger A. Mason. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Marshall, Paul. 1992. "Religion and Canadian Culture." In *Shaping a Christian Vision for Canada: Discussion Papers on Canada's Future*, ed. Aileen Van Ginkel. Markham, Ontario: Faith Today Publications.
- M'Crie, Thomas. 1871. *Statement of the Difference Between the Profession of the Reformed Church of Scotland, as Adopted by Seceders, and the Profession Contained in the New Testament and Other Acts Lately Adopted by the General Associate Synod*. Edinburgh: C.F. Lyon.
- M'Crie, Thomas. [1821] 1989. *Unity of the Church*. Dallas, Texas: Presbyterian Heritage Publications.
- North, Gary. 1989. *Political Polytheism*. Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics.
- Rushdoony, Rousas John. [1968] 1978. *The Foundations of Social Order*. Fairfax, Virginia: Thoburn Press.
- Rushdoony, Rousas John. 1973. *The Institutes of Biblical Law*. Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company.
- Rushdoony, Rousas John. 1986. *Christianity and the State*. Vallecito, California: Ross House Books.
- Rutherford, Samuel. [1644] 1982. *Lex, Rex*. Harrisonburg, Virginia: Sprinkle Publications.
- Shaw Robert. [1845] 1980. *An Exposition of the Confession of Faith*. Lochcarron, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications.
- Smeaton, George. 1875. *The Scottish Theory of Ecclesiastical Establishments and How Far the Theory is Realised*. Glasgow: The Glasgow Conservative Association's Rooms.
- Symington, William. [1884] 1990. *Messiah the Prince*. Edmonton, Alberta: Still Waters Revival Books.
- Tallach, Ian R. 1980. "Publisher's Preface." In *An Exposition of the Confession of Faith*, by Robert Shaw. Lochcarron,

Scotland: Christian Focus Publications.

Various Authors. [1647] 1983. *Westminster Confession of Faith*. Scotland: Free Presbyterian Publications.

Williamson, G.I. 1964. *The Westminster Confession of Faith for Study Classes*. Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company.

Other related items from SWRB

Reformation Bookshelf CD Series Super Sale!

<http://www.swrb.com/Puritan/reformation-bookshelf-CDs.htm>

See especially **Reformation Bookshelf CD volume 25** (*God's Ordinance of Magistracy Asserted, Christ's Kingship Over the Nations Maintained and Defended, Covenants, Covenanters, Covenanted Reformation in the State, the Establishment Principle Defended, the Principle of the National Recognition of Religion, the Relation Between Church and State, National Repentance and Reformation, Women Rulers, Liberty of Conscience, and much more*) and **Reformation Bookshelf CD volume 26** (*A Defense of Liberty Against Tyrants, Civil Disobedience, Martyrs, the Right of Dissent from an Immoral Civil Government, A Covenanter's Response to Wicked Rulers in Church and State (and Unjust Taxation), Military Associations, Defensive Resistance of Tyrannical Violence, the U.S. Constitution, the Absurdity and Perfidy of All Authoritative Toleration, etc.*) for much more on this topic.

Puritan Bookshelf CD Series Super Sale

<http://www.swrb.com/Puritan/puritan-bookshelf-CDs.htm>

"I have now had several months to peruse the contents of the Reformation and Puritan Bookshelf CD sets, and the experience has been **a feast for the soul**. *They have been invaluable to me in sermon preparation and in improving personal and familial piety*. If these had been the only blessings attached to the reading of these documents, the expense (even if it had been much greater) would have been justified; but there is more here . . .

In this present time, a great many Presbyterians (particularly in North America) have forgotten and implicitly (perhaps unwittingly) rejected their Presbyterian heritage. Strangely, Westminster confessing churches have rejected the theological distinctives of the Westminster Standards. Although the Westminster Assembly produced a beautiful statement of soteriological Calvinism, the histories clearly demonstrate that soteriology was not the principle focus, nor chief interest, of the Assembly. The Assembly was primarily concerned with uniformity in worship (in accordance with the Regulative Principle), the form of church government (Presbyterianism *jus divinum*), and Church-State relations (the Establishment Principle).

It is a sad irony that the great and distinctive attainments of the Westminster Assembly have been ignored and rejected by so many Westminster confessing churches.

However, there is reason to believe that these *great attainments* are rejected largely because of ignorance. The **best books** on these subjects have not been readily available; but (thanks be to God) they **are available again on these CD sets**. For anyone interested in recovering our Presbyterian past, these CD sets are a must. It is my hope and prayer that these CD sets will be used by God to bring to light the things that were hidden, to call to remembrance the things that were forgotten."

- Steven Dilday

Licensed for preaching in the OPC

B.A. Religion and Philosophy, Campbell University (graduated summa cum laude)

M.A.R. Theological Studies Emphasis, Westminster Theological Seminary (graduated First Honors)

This collection of 62 CDs is a truly astounding accomplishment. There is nothing like this available to the ordinary Christian on the whole face of the earth.

Now, for the first time ever, ordinary Christians can have direct and near effortless access to *the very cream of Puritan and Reformed, as well as Covenanter, literature.*

These books are often in fascinating first editions and many are electronically linked and indexed for the first time. **The ordinary Christian may here dig into a simply staggering wealth of literature, from devotional and sermonic material to technical and scholarly works.**

Even in the days of the Long Reformation itself ordinary Christians didn't get to see this kind of library -- most couldn't read for a start, and even those who could, would never have been able to afford to buy even a hundredth part of the material on these CDs. Truly we are without excuse!

And the significance of this collection goes even beyond that. No longer do we have to wait for modern Reformed publishing houses to predict that a particular Reformation or Puritan book will be sufficiently popular to make it economical to reprint, or to deem it "safe" enough to be let loose on the modern evangelical church. **Rather, we are now able to see for ourselves the whole range of the Puritan and Reformed publishing enterprise, including views that are usually suppressed by most modern devotees of "Puritan" piety!**

Buy these CDs while you can, and find out for yourself what the First and Second Reformations were really all about! You'll be truly amazed, and, by God's grace, will grow from being an ordinary Christian to being an extraordinary one. *What they used to say of the Puritan John Flavel's preaching, can be said of these CDs: they are "hissing hot"!*

- Dr Jonathan D. Moore, Cambridge, UK.

(Scholar of 16th and 17th century Calvinistic literature.)

Many more comments (by Joel Beeke, the Banner of Truth magazine, Calvin Beisner [Professor of Historical Theology and Social Ethics at Knox Theological Seminary], Dr. E.P. Elliott [Christian Observer magazine], et al.) on both the new Reformation Bookshelf CD set of 30 CDs and the Puritan Bookshelf CD set of 32 CDs can be found at the end of the page at: <http://www.swrb.com/Puritan/reformation-bookshelf-CDs.htm>.

Westminster Confession of Faith Super Sale

<http://www.swrb.com/Puritan/westminster-confession.htm>

Covenanter Sale

<http://www.swrb.com/Puritan/covenanter-books.htm>

Reformed Presbytery (RPNA, Covenanters)

(reconstituted after 113 years) Super Sale

<http://www.swrb.com/Puritan/reformed-presbytery-RPNA.htm>

The Divine Right of Presbyterianism

Versus the Sin of the Independent Church Government

(and John Owen Represbyterianized) Super Sale

<http://www.swrb.com/Puritan/presbyterian-independents.htm>

Christian Reconstructionism Critiqued Super Sale

<http://www.swrb.com/Puritan/christian-reconstructionism.htm>

All titles below available from Still Waters Revival Books at: <http://www.swrb.com/pcopy/photoc.htm>.

GILLESPIE, GEORGE

Wholesome Severity Reconciled With Christian Liberty, or, The True Resolution of a Present Controversy Concerning Liberty of Conscience (1644)

One of our most rare and valuable resources. A masterpiece! Wholesome Severity was written during the sitting of the Westminster Assembly and demonstrates why Gillespie is considered one of the most influential Divines of the

seventeenth century. Here we have the question stated (regarding liberty of conscience), the middle (or biblical) way between Popish tyranny and Schismatizing liberty approved, and also confirmed from Scripture, with the testimonies of Divines, yea of whole churches added to vindicate Christ's kingship (over the idolatry of the rule of an ill-informed, sinful conscience sitting in judgement upon the truth of the Word of God). The chief arguments of exception used in (Roger Williams) *The Bloody Tenet, The Compassionate Samaritane, M.S. to A.S. etc.* are examined herein and Gillespie also deals with many of the thorny questions related to the abiding validity of the Old Testament judicial laws. Eight distinctions are added for qualifying and clearing the whole matter. In conclusion, a moving brotherly appeal is addressed to the five Apologists (Independents at the Assembly) for choosing accommodation rather than toleration. This is classic Scottish (covenanted) Presbyterianism at its best, an work that can be read over and over with increasing profit! This exceedingly rare essay is not found in Gillespie's *Works* or *The Presbyterian Armoury*, however it is also available on two cassettes for \$4.77.

Wholesome Severity is at: <http://www.swrb.com/catalog/g.htm>

RUTHERFURD, SAMUEL

A Free Disputation Against Pretended Liberty of Conscience (1649 edition.)

Rutherford's *Free Disputation*, though scarce, is still one of his most important works, with maybe only a few copies of the actual book left in existence. Though Rutherford is affectionately remembered in our day for his *Letters*, or for laying the foundations of constitutional government (against the divine right of kings) in his unsurpassed *Lex Rex*, his *Free Disputation* should not be overlooked, for it contains the same searing insights as *Lex Rex*. In fact, this book should probably be known as Rutherford's "politically incorrect" companion volume to *Lex Rex*. A sort of sequel aimed at driving pluralists and antinomians insane. Written against "the Belgick Arminians, Socinians, and other Authors contending for lawlesse liberty, or licentious Tolerations of Sects and Heresies," Rutherford explains the undiluted Biblical solution to moral relativism, especially as it is expressed in ecclesiastical and civil pluralism! (Corporate pluralism being a violation of the first commandment and an affront to the holy God of Scripture). He also deals with conscience, toleration, penology (punishment), and the judicial laws, as related to both the civil and ecclesiastical realms. Excellent sections are also included which address questions related to determining the fundamentals of religion, how covenants bind us, the perpetual obligation of social covenants (with direct application to the Solemn League and Covenant and the covenant-breaking of Cromwell and his sectarian supporters), whether the punishing of seducing teachers be persecution of conscience, and much more. In our day Francis Schaeffer, and numerous others, have critiqued many of the problems found in modern society, but most have spent little time developing explicitly Biblical solutions, especially regarding the theoretical foundations that Rutherford addresses here. Rutherford's *Free Disputation* provides a detailed blueprint for laying the foundations that must be laid before any lasting, God-honoring solutions will be found. Furthermore, Rutherford and his writings were the enemies of all governments not covenanted with Christ. This book will give you a very clear picture as to why "the beast" (civil and ecclesiastical) has reserved his special hatred for such teaching. For as Samuel Wylie noted "[t]he dispute, then, will not turn upon the point whether religion should be civilly established... but it is concerning what religion ought to be civilly established and protected, whether the religion of Jesus alone should be countenanced by civil authority, or every blasphemous, heretical, and idolatrous abomination which the subtle malignity of the old serpent and a heart deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, can frame and devise, should be put on an equal footing therewith" (*Two Sons of Oil: or, The Faithful Witness For Magistracy and Ministry Upon a Scriptural Basis*, softcover). Can our generation swallow Rutherford's hard, anti-pluralistic, Covenanter medicine, poured forth from the bottle of the first commandment, without choking on their carnal dreams of a free and righteous society divorced from God (and His absolute claims upon everyone and everything)? Or, in short, which is ultimate, God's truth or the individual conscience? Man's will or God's will? The state or Christ? Sure to be unpopular among a wicked and adulterous generation. Sure to be popular among the covenanted servants of King Jesus! Great price too, for a very rare book!

A Free Disputation is at: <http://www.swrb.com/catalog/R.htm>

WYLIE, SAMUEL B.

The Two Sons of Oil; or, the Faithful Witness for Magistracy and Ministry upon a Scriptural Basis (1850 edition, reprinted 1995)

A Covenanter classic opening Revelation 11:3-4 and Zechariah 4:14. It has been hailed as the "best presentation of the

position of the Covenanter Church that has been written." Noting that the "[t]ime has been, when the whole body of Presbyterians, in Scotland, England, and Ireland, unanimously subscribed" to these principles, "[f]or civil and ecclesiastical reformation" and that thousands bled and died for the glorious covenanted cause of civil and ecclesiastical reformation; Wylie sets out to explain and defend "that cause. Not because it is an ancient cause; not because many have sealed it with their blood; but, because," as he says, "I thought it the doctrine of the Bible, and the cause of Christ." This book explains how to tell if a government (especially a civil government) is faithful to Christ and thus to be obeyed for conscience's sake. It also gives direction regarding when and how to resist (and disassociate) yourself from governments which get their power from "the beast." Moreover, this book gives clear testimony as to what the Bible requires of civil magistrates, noting "that civil rulers should exercise their power in protecting and defending the religion of Jesus." It also gives plain reasons why dissent from the government of the United States (and other covenant breaking nations) is the legitimate Scriptural pattern.

The Two Sons of Oil is at: <http://www.swrb.com/catalog/W.htm>

REFORMED PRESBYTERY

Act, Declaration, And Testimony, For The Whole Of The Covenanted Reformation, As Attained To, And Established In, Britain and Ireland; Particularly Betwixt The Years 1638 and 1649, Inclusive. As, Also, Against All The Steps Of Defection From Said Reformation, Whether In Former Or Later Times, Since The Overthrow Of That Glorious Work, Down To This Present Day (1876)

Upholds the original work of the Westminster Assembly and testifies to the abiding worth and truth formulated in the Westminster family of documents. Upholds and defends the crown rights of King Jesus in church and state, denouncing those who would remove the crown from Christ's head by denying His right to rule (by His law) in both the civil and ecclesiastical spheres. Testifies to the received doctrine, government, worship, and discipline of the Church of Scotland in her purest (reforming) periods. Applies God's Word to the Church's corporate attainments "with a judicial approbation of the earnest contendings and attainments of the faithful, and a strong and pointed judicial condemnation of error and the promoters thereof" (The Original Covenanter and Contending Witness, Dec. 17/93, p. 558). Shows the church's great historical victories (such as the National and Solemn League and Covenant, leading to the Westminster Assembly) and exposes her enemies actions (e.g. the Prelacy of Laud; the Independency, sectarianism, covenant breaking and ungodly toleration set forth by the likes of Cromwell [and the Independents that conspired with him]; the Erastianism and civil sectarianism of William of Orange, etc.). It is not likely that you will find a more consistent working out of the principles of Calvinism anywhere. Deals with the most important matters relating to the individual, the family, the church and the state. Sets forth a faithful historical testimony of God's dealings with men during some of the most important days of church history. A basic text that should be mastered by all Christians.

The Act, Declaration, And Testimony, For The Whole Of The Covenanted Reformation is at:
<http://www.swrb.com/catalog/R.htm>

REFORMED PRESBYTERY

Auchensauhgh Renovation of the National Covenant and Solemn League and Covenant; with the Acknowledgement of Sins and Engagement to Duties as they were Renewed at Auchensauhgh in 1712... Also the Renovation of These Public Federal Deeds Ordained at Philadelphia, Oct. 8, 1880, By the Reformed Presbytery, With Accommodation of the Original Covenants, in Both Transactions, to their Times and Positions Respectively (1880 ed.)

"In 1712, at Auchensauhgh, the Covenants, National and Solemn League, were renewed... At the renewal the covenant bonds were recognized as binding the descendants of those who first entered into those bonds. The Covenanters, however, sought to display the true intent of those Covenants with marginal notes. These notes explained that the Church of Jesus Christ, in Scotland (and around the world), must not join hands with any political power in rebellion to the crown rights of King Jesus. The Covenanters pledged the Covenanted Reformed Presbyterian Church to the support of lawful magistracy (i.e. magistracy which conformed itself to the precepts of God's Word) and declared themselves and their posterity against support of any power, in Church or State, which lacked biblical authority." (From "About the Covenanted Reformed Presbyterian Church"). An excellent introduction (historical and moral) regarding the reasons, motives and manner of fulfilling the duty of covenanting with God. Especially helpful concerning the Biblical view of the blessings (for covenant-keepers) and cursings (for covenant breakers) related to covenanting. As noted on page 37,

"the godly usually in times of great defection from the purity and power of religion, and corruption of the ordinances of God's worship, set about renewing their covenant, thereby to prevent covenant curses, and procure covenant blessing; as we find both in scripture record, 2 Chron. 15:12-13; 29:10; 34:30-31; Ezra 10:3, and in our own ecclesiastical history." Times like ours certainly call for a revival of the Scriptural ordinance of covenanting, for "[t]he nations throughout Christendom, continue in league with Antichrist and give their strength to the beast. They still refuse to profess and defend the true religion in doctrine, worship, government and discipline, contrary to the example of the kingdoms of Scotland, England and Ireland in the seventeenth century" (p. 136 in this book).

The **Auchensaugh Renovation of the National Covenant and Solemn League and Covenant** is at:

<http://www.swrb.com/catalog/R.htm>

[Back to swrb home page](#)