**“Convicted on Their Own Testimony” American Sentinel 2, 8.**

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A gentleman in Ohio, having received a copy of the SENTINEL, sent it to his pastor, requesting him to give his opinion of its sentiments. Accordingly the pastor writes to us, giving his objections to the teaching of the SENTINEL. As his objections and arguments have been answered time and again in these columns, it is not necessary to formally answer them here; but we will quote one paragraph from his letter. He says:- {AMS August 1887, p. 57.1}

“I should say at the outset that we are both members of the National Reform Association, in opposition to which your paper seems to be published; and as for myself, I preach National Reform doctrine on all proper occasions. Moreover, we are both lineal descendants of men who, in the days of the tyrannical Stewarts, [*sic*.] contended for ‘Christ’s Crown and Covenant;’ and for that civil and religious liberty which makes it possible for you to publish the SENTINEL to-day. This being the case, it cannot be supposed that we are in favor of a ‘union of Church and State,’ which you so much fear, for this is the very thing which our fathers contended against even to the death.” {AMS August 1887, p. 57.2}

The main point in this paragraph is the admission that the National Reform movement is identical with that of the Covenanters. This being the case, and it is the simple truth, it is easy to ascertain whether or not National Reform aims at union of Church and State, and how much religious liberty it stands for. We wish first, however, to call attention to the statement that the Covenanters contended for that civil and religious liberty which makes it possible for us to publish the SENTINEL to-day. Well, granting for the moment that that is true, what do the National Reformers want more? Since their movement is identical with that of the Covenanters, and we now have the liberty for which the Covenanters contended, what reason is there for the existence of the National Reform Association? Or do they want something else? Are they like the physician who, when he found that his patient slept well, and had a good appetite and good digestion, said, “Well, we shall soon change all that.” Let them answer. But it is not necessary for them to answer. Their boast that they are descendants, lineal or otherwise, of the Covenanters is sufficient answer. We are well assured that if National Reform principles were in force to-day, it would not be possible for us to publish another SENTINEL. Now for the proof. {AMS August 1887, p. 57.3}

The Encyclopedia Britannica gives the following brief history of the Covenanters:- {AMS August 1887, p. 57.4}

“Covenanters, in Scottish history, the name applied to a party embracing the great majority of the people, who during the seventeenth century bound themselves to establish and maintain the Presbyterian doctrine and polity, as the sole religion of the country, to the exclusion of Prelacy and Popery.... There were several successive covenants, similar in spirit and expression, the most important being the National Covenant of 1638 and the Solemn League and Covenant of 1643. These were both based upon earlier documents.... The Solemn League and Covenant was established in the year 1643, and formed a bond between Scotland, England, and Ireland for the united preservation of the Reformed religion in the church of Scotland, the reformation of religion in England and Ireland, according to the word of God and the example of the best Reformed churches, and the extirpation of Popery and Prelacy. It was sworn [to] and subscribed by many in both nations, approved by the Parliament and Assembly at Westminster, and ratified by the General Assembly of Scotland in 1645. King Charles I. disapproved of it when he surrendered himself to the Scottish army in 1646; but in 1650 Charles II. by a solemn oath declared his approbation both of this and of the National Covenant; and in August the same year he made a further declaration at Dunfermline to the same purpose, which was renewed on the occasion of his coronation at Scone in 1651. In the same year also *the Covenant was ratified by Parliament, and subscription to it required from every member*,-it being declared that without such subscription the constitution of the Parliament was null and void.”-*Art. Covenanters*. {AMS August 1887, p. 57.5}

Lest any should think that this is prejudiced testimony, we quote what W. G. Blakie says in the Schaff-Herzog Cyclopedia. This is Presbyterian testimony. After speaking of the “Solemn League and Covenant,” Blakie says:- {AMS August 1887, p. 57.6}

“This Covenant, besides binding the subscribers to maintain the Reformed church, in its integrity, according to the word of God, pledged them ‘to endeavor the extirpation of Popery, Prelacy (*i.e*., church government by archbishops, bishops, their chancellors and commissaries, deans, deans and chapters, archdeacons, and other ecclesiastical officers depending on that hierarchy), superstition, heresy, schism, profaneness, and whatsoever shall be found contrary to sound doctrine and power of godliness, lest we partake in other men’s sins, and thereby be in danger to receive of their plagues; and that the Lord may be one, and his name one in the three kingdoms.’” {AMS August 1887, p. 57.7}

Here we have Church and State union in the most narrow sense, the union of a denomination with the State. But this will appear still more plainly when we read the following exact copy of the “Covenant” above referred {AMS August 1887, p. 57.8}

“ASSEMBLY AT EDINBURGH, AUGUST 30, 1639, SESSION 23.”

“*Act ordaining, by Ecclesiastical Authority, the Subscription of the Confession of faith and Covenant with the Assembly’s Declaration*. {AMS August 1887, p. 58.1}

“The General Assembly considering the great happiness which may flow from a full and perfect union of this kirk and kingdom, by joining of all in one and the same covenant with God, with the King’s Majesty, and amongst ourselves; having, by our great oath, declared the uprightness and loyalty of our intentions in all our proceedings; and having withal supplicated his Majesty’s high Commissioner, and the Lords of his Majesty’s honorable privy council, to enjoin, by act of council, all the lieges in time coming to subscribe the Confession of Faith and Covenant; which, as a testimony of our fidelity to God, and loyalty to our king, we have subscribed: And seeing his Majesty’s high Commissioner, and the Lords of his Majesty’s honorable privy council, have granted the desire of our supplication, ordaining, by civil authority, all his Majesty’s lieges, in time coming, to subscribe the foresaid Covenant: that our union may be the more full and perfect, we, by our act and constitution ecclesiastical, do approve the foresaid Covenant in all the heads and clauses thereof; and ordain of new, under all ecclesiastical censure. That all the masters of universities, colleges, and schools, all scholars at the passing of their degrees, all persons suspected of Papistry, or any other error; and finally, all the members of this kirk and kingdom, subscribe the same, with these words prefixed to their subscription. ‘The Article of this Covenant, which was at the first subscription referred to the determination of the General Assembly, being determined; and thereby the five articles of Perth, the government of the kirk by bishops, the civil places and power of kirkmen, upon the reasons and grounds contained in the acts of the General Assembly, declared to be unlawful within this kirk; We subscribe according to the determination foresaid.’ And ordain the Covenant, with this declaration, to be insert in the registers of the Assemblies of this kirk, general, provincial, and *presbyterial, ad perpetuam rei memoriam*. And in all humility supplicate his Majesty’s high Commissioner, and the honorable Estates of Parliament, by their authority, to ratify and *enjoin the same, under all civil pains*; which will tend to the glory of God, preservation of religion, the King’s Majesty’s honor, and perfect peace of this kirk and kingdom.” {AMS August 1887, p. 58.2}

Notice that this act ordained “a *full* and *perfect union*” of the church and kingdom, and the suppression of error “under all civil pains.” We cannot but smile when our friend tells how the Covenanters contended for liberty of conscience. They contended for liberty for themselves, that is true; but having obtained it, they were not content therewith, but must needs *force their liberty* upon everybody else! They reasoned, no doubt, that what suited them was good for everybody else, and if other people did not chance to think so, why then they ought, for the good of their own souls, to be *compelled* to accept the Covenanters’ liberty of conscience. {AMS August 1887, p. 58.3}

To show how completely the church ruled the State, we quote again from the Encyclopedia Britannica. After having described the manner by which the Act of 1639 was secured, the writer says:- {AMS August 1887, p. 58.4}

“The church was now secure. She had gained the day, because on this occasion the zeal of the ministers and the interests of the nobles had been both enlisted in her service. The victory had been won in her name, and the influence of her ministers was vastly increased. For the spiritual tyranny which they introduced, the reader should refer to Buckle’s famous chapter; or, if he think those statements to be partial or exaggerated, to original records, such as those of the presbyteries of St. Andrews and Cupar. The arrogance of the ministers’ pretensions, and the readiness with which these pretensions were granted, the appalling conceptions of the Deity which were inculcated, and the absence of all contrary expressions of opinion, the intrusion on the domain of the magistrate, the vexatious interference in every detail of family and commercial life, and the patience with which it was borne, are to an English reader alike amazing. ‘We acknowledge,’ said they, ‘that according to the latitude of the word of God (which is our theme) we are allowed to treat in an ecclesiastical way of greatest and smallest, from the king’s throne that should be established in righteousness, to the merchant’s balance that should be used in faithfulness.’ The liberality of the interpretation given to this can only be judged of after minute reading.”-*Encyclopedia Britannica, art. Presbyterianism*. {AMS August 1887, p. 58.5}

It will not be denied that Buckle was not partial toward religion; yet since his statements are supported by the records, and he gives the authority for them all, no one can deny that he has written the truth. Accordingly we quote one paragraph from the “famous chapter” to which the Britannica refers. {AMS August 1887, p. 58.6}

It will show the effect of the “full and perfect union” of that “kirk and kingdom:”- {AMS August 1887, p. 58.7}

“According to the Presbyterian polity, which reached its height in the seventeenth century, the clergyman of the parish selected a certain number of laymen on whom he could depend, and who, under the name of elders, were his counselors, or rather the ministers of his authority. They, when assembled together, formed what was called the Kirk-session, and this little court, which enforced the decisions uttered in the pulpit, was so supported by the superstitious reverence of the people, that it was far more powerful than any civil tribunal. By its aid the minister became supreme. For, whoever presumed to disobey him was excommunicated, was deprived of his property, and was believed to have incurred the penalty of eternal perdition. Against such weapons, in such a state of society, resistance was impossible. The clergy interfered with every man’s private concerns, ordered how he should govern his family, and often took upon themselves the personal control of his household. Their minions, the elders, were everywhere; for each parish was divided into several quarters, and to each quarter one of these officials was allotted, in order that he might take special notice of what was done in his own district. Besides this, spies were previously appointed, so that nothing could escape their supervision. Not only the streets, but even private houses were searched, and ran-sacked, to see if anyone was absent from church while the minister was preaching. To him all must listen, and him all must obey. Without the consent of his tribunal, no person might engage himself either as a domestic servant, or as a field laborer. If anyone incurred the displeasure of the clergy, they did not scruple to summon his servants and force them to state whatever they knew respecting him, and whatever they had seen done in his house. To speak disrespectfully of a preacher was a grievous offense; to differ from him was a heresy; even to pass him in the streets without saluting him, was punished as a crime. His very name was regarded as sacred, and not to be taken in vain. And, that, it might be properly protected, and held in due honor, an Assembly of the church, in 1642, forbade it to be used in any public paper, unless the consent of the holy man had been previously obtained.”-*History of Civilization in England, Vol. 2, chap. 5*. {AMS August 1887, p. 58.8}

We who have never experienced of ecclesiastical supremacy, can scarcely believe that such a state of things could ever exist. Yet all know that under Papal supremacy the Inquisition carried on the most barbarous system of espionage, and why should we wonder that it could be done under Presbyterian supremacy. A Catholic is no worse by nature than a man of belief. The Catholics did not persecute because they were by nature worse than others, neither was it because their religious tenets were erroneous, but because by their polity they were bound to enforce their religious tenets, right or wrong, upon everybody. If the Catholics were not bound by their superiors to carry their religion into politics, they would be just as good citizens as men of any other denomination. And when men of any or all denominations try to enforce their opinions, no matter how true those opinions may be, upon others, nothing but persecution can come. So the Covenanters contended against Catholic Popery, but established a Protestant Popery that was equally bad. {AMS August 1887, p. 58.9}

We do not quote these things for the purpose of bringing Scotch Presbyterianism into disrepute, nor for the purpose of holding Covenanters up to scorn. We simply wish to show the inevitable result of a union, no matter what its nature, between religious bodies and the State. We know that the National Reformers say that they do not want a union of Church and State, but a union of religion and the State; but, as we have many times shown, this is a distinction without any difference. That was all the Covenanters wanted. It is sufficient at this time to remind the reader that there can be no religion where there are no people to profess religion. Religion cannot therefore be exhibited abstractly, but only in connection with some religious body. And so, when you have a union of religion and the State, you necessarily have a union of some religious body or bodies and the State. {AMS August 1887, p. 58.10}

The last quotation we made showed the power which the ministers arrogated to themselves. The way in which this came about was very natural. They had been foremost in the fight against Catholic oppression, and thus were looked up to with great reverence as in a sense the saviours of the country. Then when freedom from Catholic rule was gained, they were loth to lay down the power which they had acquired, and which the people readily acknowledged. All history and experience show that when any man once gets power in his hands, he imagines that the people can never be so well of with that power in any other hands. So the Protestant clergy, believing that the religion which they professed was “the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth,” and having the power in their hands, enforced their religion, even to the smallest minutia, upon the people. {AMS August 1887, p. 58.11}

Now let it be remembered that the National Reform Association has set for its model the work of the Covenanters; that the leading National Reformers boast of their descent from the Covenanters; and that the liberty which was had under the “Covenant,” is the liberty which they wish to establish in this country, and then decide whether such “liberty” is better than that which we now enjoy. That the National Reformers do expect to have a Protestant hierarchy, who shall rule with as much despotism as did the Covenanter clergy, or the priests of Rome, is evident from the following utterance of Rev. J. C. K. Milligan, one of the leading National Reformers:- {AMS August 1887, p. 59.1}

“If our nation will accept God as the source of all authority, Christ Jesus as the nation’s king, and his law as of supreme authority over them, its creed is orthodox. The theological questions referred to do not belong to the nation as a civil organism, nor to our movement, which is a civil and not an ecclesiastical one; *the churches must settle these questions* among themselves and with each other, and at least *we will not allow the civil Government* to decide between them, and to ordain church doctrines, ordinances, and laws.”-*Christian Statesman, Feb. 21, 1884*. {AMS August 1887, p. 59.2}

“We will not allow,” etc. Nothing shall be enacted which we ministers do not approve. This is the language of ecclesiastical despotism. Plenty more might be given to the same effect, but this is sufficient to show that National Reform success means not only a union of Church and State, but a union with the State subordinate to the Church, and bound to carry out the commands of the clergy. That means “liberty of conscience”-to those who are in the ascendency-but galling oppression to all dissenters. We know of no higher ground upon which we could base a request to the people of this country to support the AMERICAN SENTINEL, than that it is firmly set for the defense of the people against such “liberty” as the National Reform Association would give us. E. J. W. {AMS August 1887, p. 59.3}