

# THE FAITH THAT IS IN THEM.

## WHY I AM A COVENANTER.

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I am a much interested reader of your symposium of denominational faiths. It proves that there is a strong substratum of agreement in all of our creeds. Our sectarian differences are largely on the surface. For every truth on which we differ, there are a hundred on which we agree.

While Covenanters are a small division of the Presbyterian family, yet we believe we have good reasons for maintaining our separate denominational existence. We are often called Reformed Presbyterians, but that name is a misnomer. History proves us to be the only original Presbyterians holding the unabridged standards of the Westminster Assembly. Johnson's Universal Encyclopedia, Volume II, page 295, says, "It is in the standards of the Covenanters that we have to look for a true embodiment of the tenets held by the great body of English and Scottish Presbyterians of 1643. Others gave in to the Revolution Settlement, and afterwards found cause to secede. The Covenanters never gave in, and of course never seceded." We are the body from which all other Presbyterian churches are secessionists: the original stock from which all other Presbyterians are sprouts.

In common with the majority of Presbyterians, we believe the Bible is divinely and supernaturally inspired, and that its inspiration, as it came from the pens of its original writers, is verbal and complete; so that it is the very infallible Word of God. With the Campbellites we hold that the Bible is the only and all sufficient rule of faith and practice. We believe creeds and confessions, only as they are agreeable unto and founded on the Bible. As the Lutherans hold to the Augsburg Confession, we hold to the Westminster, as most agreeable with the Scriptures. While we date our doctrine and polity back through the New and Old Testament church, yet our present denominational history dates from the second Reformation in Scotland and England. The government tried to enforce a Catholic and Episcopal form of worship upon the people. The Covenanters stood for liberty of conscience and freedom of worship. So earnestly did they contend for these principles, that they wrote them in the form of covenants, to which they gave their signature and oath. This was the practice of the church in Bible times. It is still the practice of Covenanters. In 1871, at the meeting of our synod in Pittsburgh, Pa., several hundred delegates arose as one man and with uplifted hand, took a solemn oath to a covenant embodying the testimony of the church. This is why we are called Covenanters.

In common with several denominations who have reported in this symposium, and with more than

twenty sects in this country, we refuse to receive into the church members of secret lodges. We believe these to be the unfruitful works of darkness with which the Bible commands us to have no fellowship.

We hold the doctrine and practice of strict communion. None are admitted to the communion table who are not first admitted to membership. We regard it as unfair to impose conditions of communion on our own members and not require them of others. In common with the Holland Reformed, the United, the Associate and the Associate Reformed Presbyterian churches, we exclude from our worship all hymns of human composition, and use only the inspired Psalms. This was the practice of the whole body of Presbyterians until two or three generations ago. Only the inspired Psalms were used in the church in both Old and New Testament times. They were sung by Christ and His Apostles, and by the early Christians, and it was centuries afterward, when the church became corrupted, that the hymns of men began to be substituted for the inspired Word of God.

Finally, that which separates us most from other denominations, and that practice in which we stand alone, is in refusing to vote in elections, or hold office, or serve on juries, or engage in any civil service that involves an oath to the Constitution of the United States. We hold that the Constitution is atheistic, that it contains a number of provisions that plainly contradict the Word of God. We hold that it is

not only a Bible doctrine, but one of the original and fundamental tenets of the Presbyterian church, that Christ is not only the supreme authority in the church, but also in the state. It has always been the practice of Covenanters to refuse to swear supreme allegiance to any constitution that does not recognize the authority of Christ.

In our covenant to which we are sworn are these words "We take ourselves sacredly bound to regulate all our civil relations, attachments, professions and deportment, by our allegiance and loyalty to the Lord, our King, Lawgiver and Judge; and by this, our oath, we are pledged to promote the interests of public order and justice, to support cheerfully whatever is for the good of the commonwealth in which we dwell, and to pursue this object in all things not forbidden by the law of God, or inconsistent with public dissent from an unscriptural and immoral civil power."

Covenanters in the United States and Canada number about ten thousand. They are most numerous in Pennsylvania, where they have a college at Beaver Falls, and a theological seminary in Alleghany. They have quite successful foreign missions in Syria, Cyprus, and China; also a strong Freedman's Mission and academy at Selma, Alabama, and a flourishing Indian mission near Apache, Okl. There is a synod of Covenanters in Scotland and one in Ireland. In all, they support two weekly papers and three monthly magazines.