

# Succinct Rebuttal to the Neo-Steelite Thesis

(Drawn from the helpful analysis of Rev. Matthew Winzer and Mr. Kevin Barrow)

1. The SL&C espouses biblical principles, and so far as principles are concerned the SL&C should be highly esteemed.
2. The biblical principles of the SL&C are incorporated within the Westminster Standards, so that any person who subscribes the Westminster Standards should charitably be regarded as maintaining the principles of the SL&C.
3. The SL&C also contains sworn obligations to particular parties within a specific situation. Those parties are the geo-political nations of Scotland, England, and Ireland. The sworn obligations pertain especially to the Church and State situation of Scotland and England of that time.
4. All parties who subscribed the SL&C, namely, those in Church and State in Scotland, England, and Ireland, were bound to fulfill the sworn obligations as stated in the SL&C. God is not a party to the covenant because He has not dictated the particular terms of it. He is, however, a witness to the covenant, and stands ready to avenge the quarrel that might arise from one earthly party failing to fulfill its promise to another earthly party.
5. Only lawful authority was able to impose the covenants, and their imposition was restricted to the people over whom they exercised authority, namely, the people of Scotland, England, and Ireland. Whatever authority the Parliament and Convention acted with during the civil wars, it was only a provisional authority, and it required the sanction of the king before it could be regarded as an established law.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> An awareness of the conciliar origin of parliamentary authority is important. After the Militia Ordinance of 1642 unto 1660, the English Westminster parliament ruled *de facto* by convention. Nevertheless, sworn obligations remained upon the people of the land as legislated via ordinances through the English Westminster Parliament, without the king's assent. However, the English king, took residence and set up Parliament in Oxford. The Oxford Parliament was in direct competition with the Westminster Parliament. The struggle for supremacy ensued. Though we know who prevailed, at the time, and all the Statues of the Realm from the Oxford Parliament (bearing the assent and will of the king) were burned. Even to this day, the Realm does not recognize the legal authority of the ordinances produced by the Westminster parliament during this period, having not the expression of the will of the king annexed to them, which if so expressed, would remain a legal Statue of the Realm. In Scotland, the legal implementation of the covenants ensued between the king and the Scottish Parliament. Therefore Scotland was legally bound to the covenants *de jure*.

So, Scotland's covenant carried the full weight of law in Scotland. But, if the king's sanction is required to give legislation the full weight of law, what is to be done with the ordinances of the English Parliament which were not ratified by the king's sanction? These were called "ordinances" for the very reason that they required the king to pass them before they could be regarded as statutes. Having found that the work of the Westminster Assembly lacked full legal authority so far as England was concerned, we will find that the king's dominions belonged to England, not Scotland. Now, if the Solemn League and Covenant lacked the full status of law in England, then, even if England's laws applied to all of her dominions (which experts deny), the Solemn League and Covenant must be regarded as lacking full legal status in England's dominions.

Furthermore, the commonly used historical argument of the neo-Covenanters—that Charles II swearing to own the SL&C and to prosecute and promote it in his kingdoms, lands, dominions, and plantations binds Americans to perpetual obligation to it—is self-defeating. The authority by which the colonial charters were granted was an authority which neo-Covenanters disown (i.e. The Neo-Covenanters believe that the binding obligation of the covenants is via the English link and authority of the king). Therefore they are stuck on the horns of a dilemma, (Continued on next page)

6. With the alteration of the situation to which a covenant directs itself, the sworn obligation is no longer binding. In Ezek. 17, the covenant obligation was, “*that the kingdom might be base, that it might not lift itself up,*” v. 14, i.e. Israel would be subject to Babylonian rule and were not permitted to rebel against the sovereignty of Babylon. But Zedekiah seeks help from Egypt, and thereby transgresses the explicit terms of the covenant. Because God is a witness to the covenant, He owns it as His covenant, v. 19, and must avenge the quarrel of it. All of which is fulfilled in the captivity. But when Babylon ceased to exercise sovereignty over Israel, the people could return to their own land in freedom. God indeed has borne witness to the covenant, but because the circumstances to which the covenant directed itself have ceased to exist, the people are no longer obliged to be subject to Babylon.

7. The situation in Scotland, England, and Ireland of the 1640s has most certainly ceased to exist. That being the case, the sworn obligation between these nations ceases to exist. New treaties have been constituted between these nations, to which God is a witness, and for which he will bring transgression into judgment. With the making of a new covenant, the old ceases. Otherwise we are still obliged to the temple and its services.

8. Covenant renewal can only be undertaken by the original parties which subscribed the covenant, else it is fraudulent. The Convention of Estates in Scotland and the Parliament of England are the only lawful authorities which can impose a renewal of the terms of the SL&C. They can only impose such a renewal within the territories over which they exercise authority. Failing that, the SL&C of the three kingdoms, like the civil law of Israel, “expired together with the State of that people; not obliging any other now, further than the general equity thereof may require.”

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(1.) If that authority was lawful, then they are bound to acknowledge that the charters were granted by an authority which rescinded the covenants; in which case, they defeat their own argument that the colonial constitution was bound to the covenants.

(2.) If that authority is unlawful, then they are bound to acknowledge that the charters do not carry the weight of law; in which case, they defeat their own argument that the colonies were bound to the constitution of England, which they consider to be obliged to the covenants.

These problems are easily removed by adopting the apostolic and Presbyterian view of civil magistracy: “the powers that be are ordained of God,” and “difference in religion doth not make void the magistrates’ just and legal authority.”