

PRESBYTERIANS

*A POPULAR NARRATIVE OF THEIR ORIGIN, PROGRESS,
DOCTRINES, AND ACHIEVEMENTS*

BY

REV. GEO. P. HAYS, D. D., LL. D.

WITH SPECIAL CHAPTERS BY REV. W. J. REID, D. D., AND REV. A. G. WALLACE, D. D., OF THE UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF NORTH AMERICA;
REV. J. M. HOWARD, D. D., AND REV. J. M. HUBBERT, D. D., OF THE CUMBERLAND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH; REV. MOSES D. HOGE, D. D., OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES, AND REV. W. H. ROBERTS, D. D., LL. D., AMERICAN SECRETARY,
PRESBYTERIAN ALLIANCE

INTRODUCTIONS BY

REV. JOHN HALL, D. D., LL. D.,

AND

REV. WILLIAM E. MOORE, D. D., LL. D.

NEW YORK

J. A. HILL & CO., PUBLISHERS

1892

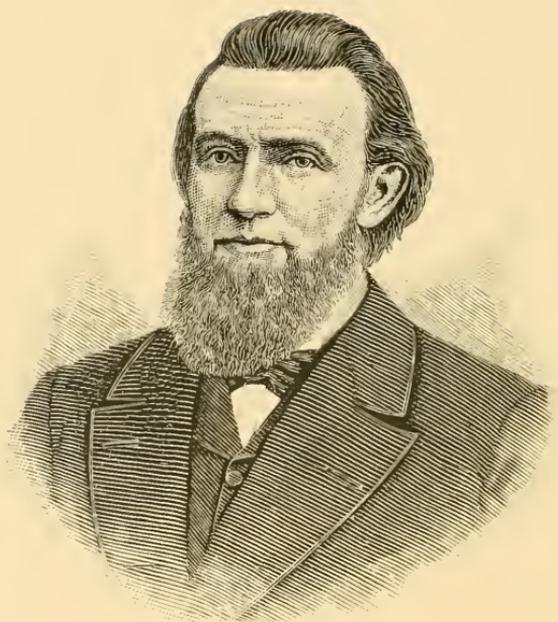


JOHN CALVIN.

COPYRIGHT, 1892,
BY
J. A. HILL & COMPANY.

All rights reserved.

THE MERSON COMPANY PRESS,
RAHWAY, N. J.



J. R. W. SLOANE, D. D.

CHAPTER XIX.

REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN (COVENANTER) CHURCH.

AT the organization of the Presbyterian Church in Scotland in the sixteenth century, the ministers and people followed the example of Moses at Sinai, and entered into a national covenant. They believed the conduct of Moses and the Hebrews in repeating their Covenant on the Plains of Moab, and Joshua and the Israelites in repeating this covenant afterward at Shechem, completely authorized the binding of rulers and people by a formal bond to the recognition of Almighty God as the Ruler, and his law as the standard of morals in every relation of life. The Church and the nation are both of divine ordinance; and while their fields of authority and operation are wholly independent and distinct, yet each in its own sphere is bound to recognize the government of God, and in the duties which belong to it is bound to obey the divine will. The Church is not to domineer over the state, as does the Pope; neither is the State to domineer over the Church, which is Erastianism. Jesus Christ, as head of the Church and ruler of the nation, holds each to accountability for the discharge of its own duties, and for non-interference with the prerogatives of the other. Whatever may be the office of government, the moral law should be its code of morals, and it should recognize in national and international affairs its responsibility to the divine authority.

On these principles, in 1580, the people of Scotland prepared the National Covenant of Scotland, and that Covenant was subscribed to by all ranks of the people. But it is hard to bind effectually a state officer who has no conscience, in the faithful performance of his duty. When, therefore, in 1603, King James became king of both Scotland and England, he had no scruples about violating his oaths to the Scottish nation. The English Puritans had great expectations based upon the ascendancy of that oath-bound Protestant king to the English throne. James cherished great expectations of escaping from his bondage to his duty, under his oath in Scotland, by becoming a monarch in England and head of the Church. When, therefore, the attempt of his son Charles to establish prelacy in Scotland in 1638 issued in a riot, it is not strange that the Scotch people renewed their National Covenant, and in 1643 adopted the "Solemn League and Covenant," proposing that it should become part of the Constitution of the kingdom. A comparatively small number of the Scotch Presbyterians finally adhered to their principles, sacrificing their Church relations. The restoration of Charles and the ascendancy of James II. brought on the Covenanters all forms of persecution and banishment. Many were martyred, many submitted, and many gave up the Covenant. In 1680 Cameron and Cargill, as the leaders of the resolute remnant, issued the "Sanquhar Declaration." That same year Cameron perished, and the next year Cargill was executed at Edinburgh. This left their followers without a minister.

If ever a communion of lay Christians proved their ability to maintain their denomination without a ministry, the Covenanter Church has achieved this success.

In Scotland and in this country its people have been at different times, and for years, without a ministry ; but in each case they have betaken themselves to the course pursued by their Scotch ancestry after the death of Cargill. They organized a system of societies among themselves, and met as often as they could. The American Covenanters are the lineal descendants of these Scotch Presbyterians, and hold fast to their testimony for the obligation of nations to recognize the dominion of Christ. At the Revolution of 1688, many of the Covenanters were not satisfied with the settlement made at the ascension of William and Mary. By that arrangement royal supremacy of the Church was recognized in the establishment of Episcopacy in England and Ireland, and Presbyterianism in Scotland. The other Presbyterians in Scotland accepted the arrangement, but the Covenanters believed that the principles were just as much violated by having a king the head of the Presbyterian Church, and not bound in his national duty to recognize the government of God, as if the particular Church which he recognized had been some other denomination.

Large numbers of these testifying people had come to this country previous to that date. Very many more came afterward. In 1752 Rev. John Cuthbertson arrived in America from the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland. He was afterward joined by Rev. Messrs. Linn and Dobbin, from the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland. These organized a Presbytery in 1774, and became a distinct ecclesiastical body in North America. In 1782 a movement was made for the union of the Covenanter Church and the Associate Church of the United States. Into this

union all of the Covenanter ministers went, but many of the people were not satisfied with the union. For a season the people maintained their denominational existence without the presence in this country of any minister, or any Presbyterian organization. As they came to this country in little groups or single families, the Scotch Covenanters scattered themselves all up and down the Atlantic coast. Some settled in New England, others in New Jersey, very many in Eastern Pennsylvania, and quite a goodly number in South Carolina. Many of these immigrants identified themselves with those who refused to go into the union. It was difficult for these pastorless people thus scattered to maintain their unity and acquaintance with each other. Through the fifteen years that succeeded the union of the Covenanter and Associate Churches, at varying intervals, five ministers, Revs. Reid, McGarragh, King, McKinney and Gibson, and two theological students, Messrs. Black and Wylie, came over from their respective Presbyteries in Ireland and Scotland. In 1798 Revs. McKinney and Gibson, with a number of Ruling Elders, reconstituted the Reformed Presbytery of America, at Philadelphia. They appointed three committees for the management of Church affairs in the different sections of the country. In 1809 these three committees were constituted three Presbyteries, and the Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in America was organized. In 1823 the Presbyteries had grown to sufficient size for each to manage the business in its own section, and it was decided to change the Synod from a general body to a delegated body; and instead of meeting every year it should meet biennially.

The growth of this Church had been steady if not rapid; and they were now an intelligent and well-instructed people, with strong convictions of duty and affectionate adherence to their blood-baptized principles. In 1830 the denomination was agitated over the question about their members definitely "incorporating" themselves with the American government by taking the oath of allegiance. This controversy culminated in a division, in 1833, into what was popularly known as the Old Side and the New Side. The Old Side section insisted that, if the Church believed that it should testify against the nation's refusal to recognize the government of God in national affairs, the private members of the Church ought to enforce that testimony by their conduct. The New Side, on the other hand, believed that, while the defects of the Constitution were very great and extremely to be regretted, yet that a sufficient testimony could be borne by the action of the Church, without requiring the members to refuse to vote until the defects were cured. This discussion was very thorough and naturally led to much feeling, and brought into existence another denomination. Very many of the ministers of the New Side, and a number of their congregations, have joined various other Presbyterian bodies since that time.

The legal name of the New Side is the "The General Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America." The statistics of this Synod for the year 1892 give the following: 40 ministers and licentiates, 6200 communicants and about 2800 Sabbath-school scholars. There is, under the care of this Synod, one theological seminary located at Philadelphia, one Foreign Mission station in Northern India,

and various other missionary stations in this country and in Canada.

The Old Side Covenanter Church has for its legal name "The Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in the United States of North America." The minutes of this Synod for the year 1891 give the following statistics : presbyteries 11, ministers, 123 ; congregations, 127 ; church members, 11,272, and Sabbath-school scholars, 13,011. The Synod has under its care a theological seminary located at Allegheny City, and Geneva College at Beaver Falls, Pa. It has Mission work at Latakiyeh, Syria ; Tarsus, Asia Minor ; and Cyprus. The Missions at Latakiyeh and Tarsus have several out-stations. The Church has also a Southern Mission, an Indian Mission and a Chinese Mission in this country. The benevolent contributions give a very high average per member. The gifts for Foreign Missions, Home Missions, Southern Missions, Chinese and Indian Missions amount to \$43,230, which is an average of \$3.84. For all purposes the Church gives \$216,407, or an average of \$19.19 per member. Few denominations, if any, equal that.

This Church has, from the outset of its history in this country, been a steadfast opponent of the system of slavery, and has always excluded slaveholders from the communion table. It has always been a vigorous advocate of every temperance movement and reform. Though their members have strenuously objected to the Constitution and government of the United States for its lack of Christian features, they have never hesitated to support it in the payment of their taxes, and the enlistment of their members in its armies in time of war. The Church believes that secret, oath-

bound societies are unscriptural, and forbids all connection with them as inconsistent with the higher allegiance due to the Church. The Scotch version of Psalms is used in their service of praise, without the use of organs or instruments of any kind. But a new version of their own is allowed and growing in use. The Westminster Standards are maintained in their integrity, and the denomination co-operates cordially with all other Presbyterian denominations in the support of Bible societies, philanthropic movements, efforts for education and the maintenance of general public morality.

The Synod at Sharon, Ia., in 1878, decided that "it was proper for women to speak and lead in prayer in social praying societies." The office of Deacon has been held to be open to female as well as male members, and several women have been ordained to the office by their respective Presbyteries. The women of this Church are extremely active and efficient in all missionary work and benevolent effort.

The denomination has steadily grown since the division of 1833; partly by the arrival of immigrants from the old country, and largely from its efficient work in missions, education and religious activity. After many years of preparation, at a meeting of their Synod in Pittsburgh, the denomination renewed the covenant. A suitable Committee of Arrangements had been appointed and a suitable Bond of the Covenant had been prepared; and, with the most solemn religious worship, the Synod, as representing the Church, reconsecrated the denomination to the Testimony of God. This had been frequently done by their ancestors in Scotland. After the adjournment of Synod, the same Covenant

was taken by a very large number of congregations. This Covenanting was one of the most notable events in the history of the Church in more recent times, and took place on May 27, 1871. Revs. Andrew Stevenson, James M. Beattie, J. R. W. Sloane, Thomas Sproull and William Milroy conducted the exercises.

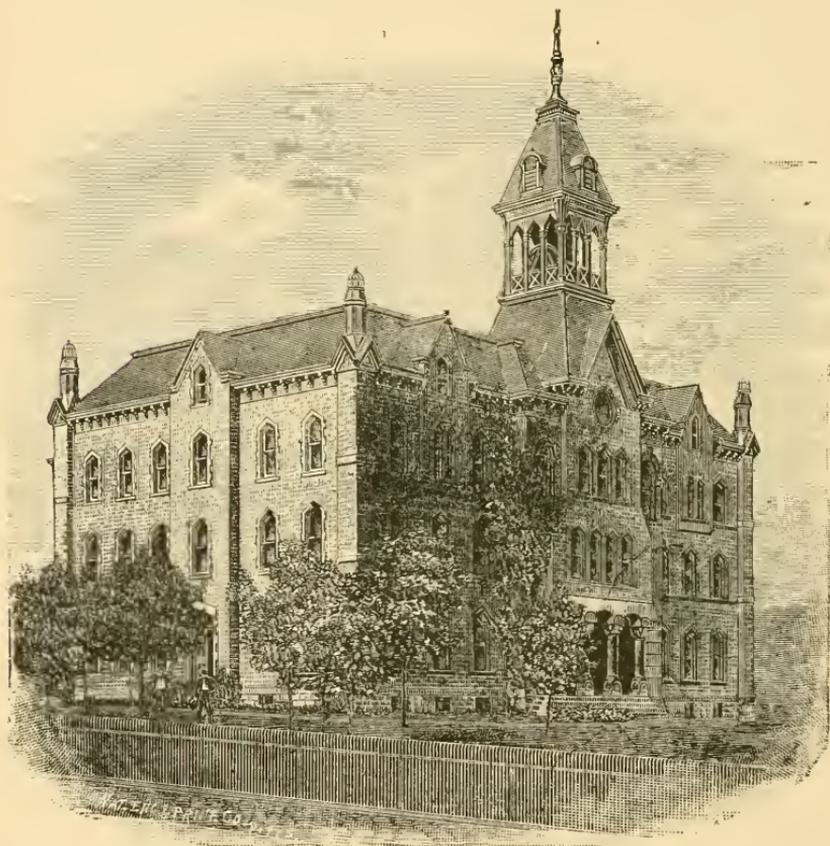
This Church is the special leader in the National Reform Movement. This is in the line of its testimony from the earliest days of Scotch Presbyterianism down to the present time. The thing which is peculiar to the Reformed Presbyterian Church (Old Side) and which distinguishes it from all others, is the refusal of its people to vote, hold office, or do any other act definitely incorporating themselves with the government until the nation shall specifically recognize Jesus Christ as the source of its civil authority, and God's law as the rule of national conduct in legislation and in the administration of its affairs, both international and domestic. While the Covenanter Church is alone in maintaining the consistency of its political dissent by refusing to vote, large numbers of Christian American citizens in other communions look upon it as a radical, if not fatal defect of the Constitution that it contains no recognition of God as supreme, or of the nation as a moral person bound by the moral law. The Constitution acknowledges no benefit to be derived from the Bible, the Sabbath, Christian morality, or Christian conduct in officials, and gives no legal basis for any Christian feature of the government.

At Xenia, O., in February, 1863, a number of citizens, of different denominations, met to consider the need of the nation of some amendment of the United States Constitution, which would preserve and legalize the Christian features of our government. The meet-

ing called a convention in July, 1863, to meet at Pittsburgh for the same purpose; and such was the origin of the National Reform Association. It is a patriotic rather than a religious movement. The Church does not need the state, but the state needs God's favor and blessing. All the Church asks of the civil law is protection to do its work in peace; but the Nation needs a regenerated public conscience and sound moral integrity to secure God's care and escape his wrath. Others may be indifferent to God's punishment, but this nation has had enough of misery inflicted on it for its sins to lead those engaged in the National Reform Movement to seek to avert from themselves, their children and their neighbors any further Divine vengeance.

Reformed Presbyterians feel specially called upon to aid the success of this association at any cost or personal sacrifice. They believe that when the proposed amendments to the Constitution shall have been incorporated into that document, and not until then, shall this be a truly Christian government. To this National Reform Movement the Church contributed, in 1891, \$4520. That Movement seeks to add to the Preamble of the Constitution of the United States, as the source of its civil authority some acknowledgment of God and the Nation's accountability to him. At present the Preamble of the Constitution simply says "We, the people of the United States," as if the people were independent of the Almighty. The National Reform Association seeks to have that Preamble amended by inserting after the words just quoted, "recognizing the dominion of Jesus Christ over the nations, and this nation's subjection to the Divine law." Mr. F. R. Brunot, an Episcopalian, of Allegheny, Pa., is President of the Association; Rev. T. P. Stevenson,

D. D., of Philadelphia, a Covenanter, is its Secretary, and *The Christian Statesman* its newspaper organ. Mr. John Alexander, of Philadelphia, is the largest individual contributor. Almost all denominations are represented in its Board of Officers and working committees.



GENEVA COLLEGE, BEAVER FALLS, PA.

A peculiar question with reference to voting was raised when, in various States, amendments to the Constitution were submitted to the vote of the people prohibiting the traffic in liquor. Voting has always been looked upon by the denomination as the most definite act of incorporation with the government ; and yet the

desire of the people was unanimous for the passage of these prohibitory amendments. The Synod of the Church, in 1884, passed a resolution that "the simple act of voting for such an amendment to the State Constitution as will secure some important principles of moral right and reform, such as the prohibitory amendments recently submitted to the people of Kansas, Iowa and Ohio, belongs to the class of acts consistent with the principles and position of the Reformed Presbyterian Church." The wisdom and prudence of this act were doubted by many of the people. These last believed that even when the immediate object sought was good, yet that voting was essentially the incorporation of the voter in the government.

At present the Church is somewhat disturbed by a peculiar case of discipline. A circular letter in favor of further discussion of the subject of voting, and of the position of the Church on various points, was issued by a number of persons. It is known as the "East End Platform," from the fact that the company which signed and issued it met at Pittsburgh "East End." It is as follows :

"We, the undersigned, agree together in the maintenance of the following principles :

"1. That while we hold it to be the duty of the Church to maintain the most advanced testimony in behalf of truth and against error, yet the terms of communion ought to be limited to the plain requirements of the Scriptures ; namely, faith in Christ and obedience to his revealed will.

"2. That persons who make a credible profession of Christ should be received into church membership on their acceptance of our Testimony and Terms of Communion without binding them to an explanation in the matter of political dissent or in other questions.

"3. That restricted communion, and not close communion, nor open communion, is the teaching of the Bible and of our Standards.

“4. That interchange of pulpits should be allowed among those who preach the evangelical doctrines of the gospel.

“5. That there should be an organic union of the whole Christian Church upon the basis of the plain teaching of the Scriptures.

“6. That free discussion should be allowed of our subordinate standards, and of every deliverance of Synod, testing them by the Bible, which is ‘the only rule of faith and manners.’”

The signers personally asserted that, in practice they had conformed to the rules of the Church; but declared that they did not believe that these rules were necessary for the promotion of the objects of the Church, and proclaimed their purpose to agitate for a change. Disciplinary proceedings were instituted against such of them as were members of the Presbytery of Pittsburgh, but confining the point at issue exclusively to Resolution 2, or the matter of “political dissent”; or voting.

The case in this shape came before the Synod at its meeting in Pittsburgh in 1891. The action of the inferior tribunal in suspending the accused from the ministry was sustained by Synod by a vote of yeas 130, nays 25. Most of the signers of the “East End Platform” have since united with other denominations.

The majority of the Synod held that while ministers and members remain in the denomination, and participate in the deliberations of its church courts, it is improper for them in speech or in print to advocate principles or practices inconsistent with the well-known position of the denomination. There seems to be general satisfaction with this action of Synod on the part of the Church. Ministers and people insist that those who become dissatisfied with the position of the Church, instead of trying to revolutionize the denomination in a disorderly way, should quietly withdraw and join some other body of Christians.