

THE
Reformed Presbyterian

AND

Governor DBWillson
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 DECEMBER, 1871.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
The Great Conflict,.....	353
The R. P. Witness and Covenanting in America,	357
New Alexandria Congregation,.....	363
Appeal,.....	365
The Harvest Cry—How shall it be met?.....	367
The Recent Act of Covenanting,	369
Meetings of Presbyteries,.....	370
Church News,.....	375
Obituary,.....	377
Book Notices,.....	380

THOMAS SPROULL,
 JOHN W. SPROULL,

EDITORS AND PROPRIETORS.

“Whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.”
Phil. 3: 16.

“Ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.”—*Jude.*

TERMS—\$1.00 per annum in the United States; \$1.12 in Canada; \$1.75 in Great Britain.
 Communications should be sent to the Editors' Address, 259 North Avenue, Allegheny City, Pa.

PITTSBURGH:
 BAKWELL & MARTHENS, PRINTERS, 71 GRANT ST.

EDITORS' ADDRESS, “ALLEGHENY, PA.”

THE

Reformed Presbyterian and Covenanter.

VOL. IX.

DECEMBER, 1871.

No. 12.

THE GREAT CONFLICT.

[Continued from page 326.]

THE sin of Israel in asking a king to rule over them like other nations, became the occasion of changing their form of government. God gave them a king in his anger, and took him away in his wrath. At the death of Saul, God placed David on the throne, and made with him a covenant, securing royal dominion to his seed forever. "I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David, my servant, thy seed will I establish forever, and build up thy throne, to all generations." Ps. 89: 3, 4. Here the seed of the woman is particularly brought to view; the Son of God incarnate, the root and the offspring of David.

The reign of David was a reign of conquest. In this he typified Jesus by the resistless power of the gospel, as well as by his wise and mysterious providence, carrying forward the great work of subjugating the world to himself. The reign of Solomon was a reign of peace, emblematical of the blessedness of the administration of the Mediator when his authority shall be everywhere acknowledged. Under Solomon's reign the glory of the kingdom of Israel culminated. In the reign of his successor the kingdom was rent asunder. The glory was waning, soon to depart. The tribes that withdrew from the house of Judah fell into gross idolatry. The subtle arts of the serpent seemed to prevail. God was provoked to send them into a long captivity. Judah, too, sinned, and was given into the power of the Chaldean nation to be scourged for her forgetfulness of God.

God did not leave himself without witnesses. Prophets were raised up to speak to the people in the name of the Lord. To them were revealed bright visions of the coming kingdom of the Mediator, gloriously contrasting with the darkness that covered the world. With what holy rapture Isaiah speaks of the king who should sit on the throne of David. "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice, from hence-

your behalf, by your parents in your baptism. Partaking of the symbols of his body and blood in the holy ordinance of the Lord's supper, you have pledged yourselves to follow him all the days of your life. When you offered yourselves to the church to be received into her school of theology, you renewed the pledge, and in special form consecrated yourselves to Christ. And by the bond of the covenant into which some of you entered at Synod, and which the rest, I doubt not, either have sworn, or will do so in your respective congregational connections, you have renewed your engagement to serve the Lord Christ with all fidelity in whatever field of labor he may assign you your work. Most opportune is it that in these times when fearless and faithful men are needed, the church has provided a test of sincerity, and means of strengthening, in the bond which she has prepared. Intelligently and conscientiously entering into this obligation you will be guarded against doing, as some have done, bringing dishonor on yourselves and reproach on the testimony of Christ, by treating the terms of our ecclesiastical communion as a trifling matter, that may be disregarded at the bidding of convenience, ambition, or it may be, a worse motive. While the church is lengthening her cords she is also strengthening her stakes. By the obligation of our covenant, the landmarks which our fathers have set are clearly defined, and new inducements presented to guard us against stepping over the lines that describe the dividing boundaries between us and other denominations. We have renewed our engagement to have no fellowship with error or immorality, either in church or state. While we promise to labor to put away schism and promote the unity of the church, we are bound to use only scriptural means, and seek for union only on a scriptural basis. Gird, then, yourselves for your work; be men of prayer; realize that you are not your own, you are the Lord's. Redeemed by his blood from this present evil world, live for him who died for you. Keep the eye of faith fixed on him; hearken to his animating voice, calling on you to war a good warfare, and assuring you of victory and triumph. "Be faithful unto death, and I will give you a crown of life." "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with my Father in his throne."

THE REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN WITNESS AND COVENANTING IN AMERICA:

IN the September number of the *Reformed Presbyterian Witness* there appeared an article entitled "Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America, and the recent Work of Covenanting," in which exception is taken to the bond, and we in this country are charged with "lowering" our testimony. To those who are acquainted with all the facts no answer or even explanation is needed. There may be some, however, who have not the opportunity of coming to a correct conclusion, and who may be misled by the article. For the benefit of such, and also, because it presents so clearly and satisfactorily the whole matter, and thus may be of use in the future for reference, we pub-

lish the following article, a copy of which has been sent to the *Witness* for publication.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN WITNESS—(GLASGOW)—*Dear Sir* : It is generally the feeling here, that the article contained in your last issue, (September,) entitled, "Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America, and the recent work of Covenanting," calls for some explanations, that the matter may be fully and fairly before your readers. We say *explanations*, not *reply*, for it is felt that the transaction referred to can furnish no matter for argument, much less for dispute, nor an occasion to any "to remonstrate with American brethren in regard to any matter affecting the church's testimony."

And first, we are most happy to be able to state that the good feeling and frequent expressions of kind fraternal regard throughout the article, are much appreciated here, and make it the more to be regretted that, through any misapprehension, or lack of accurate information, brethren in Europe, whose good opinion we are anxious to retain, should labor under any false impression regarding our recent proceedings.

It is felt, that your remark, after giving our covenant at length, and characterizing it as an interesting and important document, that, "were it taken by a church which had not been heretofore in covenant with God, through the continued obligation of their fathers' engagements, &c. &c., we would regard the taking of this covenant as a step in advance," must surely have been the result of some strange oversight. Why, it is supposing an impossibility. How could a church, not heretofore in covenant with God, say in the language in which that covenant is prefaced, "We confess and bewail our forgetfulness of the obligations laid upon us by the covenants of our fathers, in that we have often walked contrary thereunto," or swear, "in faithfulness to our own vows and to the covenants of our fathers?" No church not heretofore in covenant with God, or not recognizing previous covenant obligation, could possibly use truthfully such language, and its use by the church in North America proves clearly that, in her act of covenanting, she clearly understood her position as a covenanted church, and was not disposed to abandon any of her former attainments. Moreover, it is not the case, as you assert in the same paragraph, that the American church ever intended "to substitute this bond for the British covenants." No more was it our intention to substitute our bond for the original covenants, than it was the intention of our fathers at Auchinsburgh to substitute theirs, or of the covenanters at Dervock to substitute their "Act of Covenant Renovation" for the original covenants. It was not intended as a substitute, but as an embodiment, and clear statement, by the church, of all in the British covenants, she had ever regarded as of moral obligation upon herself in this land; not a substitute for, but an application of, the British covenants to her own position and circumstances.

In regard to objection *first*, in the article, to the American bond, that it is "a very unsatisfactory termination to all the efforts and

preparations made by our American brethren for the work of covenanting," it is only necessary to explain that the church in this country has only previously made two efforts in that direction. It is not only true, as stated in the article, that Rev. A. McLeod "was appointed to prepare a covenant," but he actually did prepare a "Form of Covenant and League," which was submitted to the Synod in Scotland and Ireland in 1830. The writer in the *Witness* can find it in the *Reformed Presbyterian and Covenanting* for October, 1869, and if he is satisfied that it "embraces the spirit and design of the vows entered into by our fathers in the Reformation," then he should be doubly satisfied with ours, for it is unspeakably more definite and faithful in relation to the obligations of our fathers' covenants, than that prepared by Dr. McLeod. By the direction of Synod, Dr. Chrystie also prepared a form of covenant, which, though adopted, was never acted on. When our present bond was prepared, that prepared by Dr. McLeod was given to the committee by Synod, as a sort of groundwork, and, by its aid, and the help received from the "Act of Covenant Renovation" used in Ireland, was the document prepared in perfect harmony with what was always understood to have been the mind and views of the church in the matter, and more fully, we believe, "embracing the spirit and design of the vows entered into by our fathers in the Reformation," than was the case in any previous attempt in the same direction.

Under *second*, we find in the article quite a number of objections to our covenant, which a little explanation will help to clear up. Exception is taken, first, "because throughout there is no mention made of the National Covenant of Scotland and the Solemn League and Covenant. These honored federal deeds are not so much as named in this American Covenant." Now we admit that this objection would have very great force, if the church engaged was located within the limits of the British Isles, where those covenants still apply in all their parts and particulars. But it is admitted in the article "that there are peculiarities in the British covenants not applicable to the American church." Now we ask what are these peculiarities? To answer this question we must premise, that there are two elements in the British covenants. These are the *local and circumstantial*, and the *moral and universal*. Both of these have still obligation in the British Isles. It must, however, we think, be apparent, that the former of these, the *local and circumstantial*, is not applicable to the church in America, whilst the obligation of the moral and universal has always been cheerfully acknowledged. But to which of these elements do the *names* of the British covenants belong? Clearly to the local and circumstantial. Why, then, embody them in an American covenant? That they might suitably have occupied a place in the preamble, is the decided opinion of many, and it is ours, and we know that a proposal in committee to insert in the preamble, "we renew the National Covenant and Solemn League and Covenant, in terms of this bond adapted to our present condition and circumstances in this country," was most cordially accepted, and would, there is reason to be-

lieve, have been accepted by Synod, but even that would not satisfy some. Notwithstanding, however, that the names of the British covenants are not in the bond, it is so clearly identified with them in many of the expressions employed, that no ambiguity can possibly exist as to their relationship, especially after Synod had adopted the following declaratory minute, "*Resolved*, that in order to satisfy the scruples of some members of Synod on the subject, we understand the expression 'Covenants of the Second Reformation' to include the National Covenant of Scotland, and the Solemn League and Covenant of the three kingdoms."

This explanation will also, we think, help to remove another ground of exception to our bond, repeatedly referred to throughout the article, viz., that we have been attempting to *Americanize* the covenants. Whatever *Americanize* means, it must, in the opinion of some good people, be something very terrible, and the fear of it, especially in relation to our covenant, seems to be, with them, a kind of disease on the brain. "That *Americanizing* of the covenants and proclaiming them to be 'our national covenant,'" the writer of the article thinks will lead to something very disastrous. But what, after all, in this case, does *Americanizing* mean? Why, just *adapting the covenants of our fathers to our circumstances in America*. Well, this does not appear so terrible a thing after all, especially when we recollect that the church in this country has already *Americanized* many of her standards. Her testimony, her terms of communion, and even her covenants, have all undergone the process, and been *Americanized* with the full approbation of brethren in Europe. Strange that the writer in the *Witness* does not notice that our fourth term of communion, which he quotes with so much favor, *Americanizes* the covenants, as much as our bond possibly can do. In that term the church in America declares, that all in the covenants which was local and circumstantial has no obligation on her, and acknowledges the moral and universal element as that by which alone she is bound. Now the very design of the bond, is to embody this element, and thus it is not only in perfect harmony with the term, but in fact some such thing was necessary to enable us to understand what the term itself meant.

The above explanation will also, we think, enable us to see how the expression, so strongly objected to in the article, viz., "*all that is moral* in the covenants, &c.," is after all not so very objectionable. The writer thinks "that with such a qualifying expression, we might recognize any covenant that was ever entered into, whether political or religious." We think not, in the sense in which we recognize the covenants of our progenitors, namely, that of *having obligation on ourselves*. For example, on the ground of such a qualifying expression we might recognize the morality of a treaty between Prussia and France, whilst we did not recognize that treaty, in regard to ourselves, as having any obligation whatever. But in our recognition of the covenants of our fathers, we not only admit their morality, but their obligation upon ourselves. But then we are told that while there are "peculiarities in the British covenants, not applicable to the American church," the grand *moral, political and religious* principles of these

covenants we maintain to be of universal and permanent applicability. We suppose this is the reason why we should not have used the expression, "all *that is moral* in the covenants." Alas for our ignorance! We were weak enough to suppose, that the moral comprehended the political and religious, that in ethics, politics and religion were included in morals, but we bow to the superior lore of Scotland, and pray that our mistake be set down to our "ignorance, not ill-intent."

But the most remarkable objection to the bond, under this head, is that "this Americanizing of the covenants of our fathers, and proclaiming them to be 'our national covenant,' savors too much of identification with the American commonwealth," and the writer fears that "the substituting of a purely American covenant for the British covenants may, by enemies, be regarded, as to some extent, abandoning the position of dissent and protest, heretofore occupied against American institutions." And then to give practical point and tone to these weighty utterances, he winds up by declaring of his American brethren, "Both they and we should know that the time is not yet come when men can 'buy and sell,' without having on their forehead or right hand 'the mark of the beast or the number of his name!'" In reading these words, applied in connection with our recent act, the first feeling is, that surely the writer inadvertently used the language in the loose, rambling way, in which it is not uncommon, now-a-days, to quote scripture, and that his words imply far more than he really meant, as we cannot imagine that he would endorse a conclusion which may be legitimately drawn from them. But waiving this, surely if there be one thing clear on the face of the bond, it is, that in the position of political dissent, hitherto maintained, the church here is most determined and firm. Indeed, we are almost tempted to ask if the writer in the *Witness* ever fully examined the bond, so as to know what it really contained. Did he read therein that "by the great and dreadful name of the Lord our God," we have deliberately sworn, not only, that "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," but after engaging to "seek the reformation" of our country by a "constitutional recognition of God as the source of all power, of Jesus Christ as the Ruler of nations, of the Holy Scriptures as the supreme rule, and the true Christian religion," it is added, "We will refuse to incorporate by any act, with the political body, until this blessed reformation has been secured."

Could the writer in the *Witness* point to any other act or covenant of renovation in which there is so strong an engagement to political dissent? Will he find in the "Auchinsough Covenant," or in the "Act of Covenant Renovation," at Dervock, anything stronger? We fearlessly assert, that for bold, uncompromising faithfulness to our position, it has never been, in covenant transaction, surpassed, if ever equalled. And it is worthy of remark in this connection, that in relation to members of the church being allowed to become mixed up, or identified, with secret societies, or with any association, social or political, inconsistent with dissent from an unscriptural and immoral civil

power, the church in this bond has taken higher ground than has ever been taken by the church in any other part of the world. With all this before him on the very face of the bond, we not only wonder how the writer in the *Witness* could find anything in the transaction, on our part, savoring of a wish for identification with the American commonwealth, but we are not surprised when we hear brethren characterize the gratuitous and offensive insinuation in terms we do not care to employ.

But suppose we were to retort his argument on himself, and say that his great anxiety to have retained the Scottish and British names and form of these covenants, in every act of renovation, no matter where performed, betrayed, on his part, a lurking desire to identify with the British commonwealth, what force would he think to be in the argument? Men sometimes would not like to be treated to a little of their own logic.

The third objection to the bond is "because some important things, contained in the original covenants, are omitted, especially the abjuration of *prelacy*." We are not willing to admit any one thing, by way of moral obligation, contained in the original covenants, has been omitted from the bond, though the better to adapt them to our circumstances one thing may be more condensed, and another more expanded. The writer in the *Witness* will please notice, that in the resolutions adopted by Synod (Min. p. 205), immediately after swearing the bond, the Synod calls its act, *Covenant Renovation*. Such was the intention of the act, and therefore there was designed to be on it, an abjuration of prelacy, as well as of every other unscriptural system of ecclesiastical polity. It may be observed, however, that prelacy here did not require to be so specifically and prominently noticed in our covenant, as it was necessary, and perhaps still is, to notice it in Great Britain. There, in history, it is known as a fierce, relentless, intolerant system, ever ready to ally itself, when that is possible, with absolute civil power, and thus rule with as high a hand, and persecute as fiercely as Popery itself. Here, however, prelacy is just one of the many Protestant denominations, living quietly side by side with its neighbors, prosecuting its own work, and no more requiring special abjuration than Congregationalism, Methodism, or any other unscriptural form of ecclesiastical polity, all of which are disowned and rejected as "damaging to purity, peace and unity in the household of faith."

One word more in relation to the newspaper reports referred to in the article. We have no hesitation in saying that these reports, in many cases, by no means convey the sentiments intended to be expressed by speakers in Synod, on the subject of the British covenants. From personal intercourse, since the meeting of Synod, with many of the speakers, we can testify, that one and all declare that they had no intention to disparage, or utter a word derogatory of these covenants, but merely to express the strong conviction, that in their original form, without some such adaptation as was attempted in the bond, they were not suited for an Act of Covenanting by the Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America.

Deprecating misunderstandings, as often leading to something more

serious, and trusting that these explanations may remove any misapprehensions that may anywhere prevail,

I am, with much respect and esteem,

JAMES KENNEDY.

NEW YORK, October 10th, 1871.

NEW ALEXANDRIA CONGREGATION.

NEW Alexandria, from which the congregation has received its name, is a post borough of Westmoreland county, Pennsylvania, on the Loyalhanna creek and on the turnpike from Blairsville to Pittsburgh, about 33 miles east of the latter. It is a very old place, and like nearly all Western Pennsylvania villages, presents but few outward attractions to a visitor, though, being the centre of a rich agricultural country, it does a thriving business. The nearest railroad station is Latrobe, about seven miles distant.

Samuel Patterson, father of elder Patterson, was the first Covenanter that settled in the immediate neighborhood. He came some time near the close of the last century. His most convenient place of worship was Greensburg, about ten miles distant. Rev. J. Black, who supplied pretty much all the vacancies west of the Alleghenies at that time, preached occasionally there. After a little, New Alexandria became a station, and arrangements were made, by which twice a year he was to preach in the house of Mr. Patterson. In the course of time a congregation was organized out of a number of missionary stations and societies. It included in its bounds, Greensburg, New Alexandria, Thompson's Run, Puckety, &c., &c. "Blacklegs," now Clarksburg, was afterwards added. Rev. John Cannon, the first pastor, was ordained and installed September 16th, 1816.

In 1822 all the branches were struck off, except Greensburg, Clarksburg and New Alexandria. Mr. Cannon continued pastor of this congregation until his death, which took place Feb. 2, 1836.

In 1841 a division was made, Greensburg and Clarksburg, about twenty-three miles apart, forming one congregation, and New Alexandria another. Rev. James Milligan was installed pastor over the latter in 1842, and released in 1847. His son and successor, Rev. A. M. Milligan was ordained and installed Nov. 23, 1848, and translated to Philadelphia in 1853. Rev. S. O. Wylie was ordained and installed pastor over Greensburg and Clarksburg, May 17, 1843, and translated to Philadelphia in 1844. Rev. R. B. Cannon, his successor and son of the first pastor of the entire congregation, was ordained and installed May, 1847, and released April, 1854.

In 1855 the three branches were reunited, and in 1856 Rev. A. M. Milligan recalled from Philadelphia and installed. In 1866 he was translated to Pittsburgh.

In 1867 one more division was made, New Alexandria and Greensburg, constituting one congregation, and Clarksburg another. On the 17th of June, 1868, Rev. T. A. Sproull was ordained and installed pastor of the former, and on the 18th of November, 1868, Rev. James A. Black pastor of the latter.