

FIRST
INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION

OF

Reformed Presbyterian Churches.

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Scotland, from lake, and tarn, and rill,
And mountain hold and heathery hill,
Shall catch and echo back the note,
As if she heard upon her air
Once more her Cameronian's prayer
And song of freedom float."

REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN LITERATURE (AMERICAN).

By the Rev. J. C. M'FEETERS, Philadelphia.

THE Reformed Presbyterian Church of America, as a literary field, has not been over-productive. Yet there have been gleanings, if not harvests. If libraries have not been created they have been supplemented. If the volumes be few they are of some value, being mostly the discussion of important and neglected truths.

The American Covenanters, from the beginning of their history, have recognized the importance of the press, and have availed themselves of its power in disseminating the royal and redemptive truths of their Lord. Having a precious inheritance bequeathed by their Scottish ancestors, entrusted with the principles that survived the fires of persecution, honoured with a glorious banner to unfurl in the sight of the world—a banner bedewed with the blood of its defenders—and realizing the sacredness of the bonds that bind with perpetual obligation, the Covenanters of America have with some self-sacrifice and courage occupied the grounds won in the Reformation struggles of the Seventeenth century, and have proclaimed with voice and pen the glory of the sovereign Saviour, His authority over all powers and potentates, and the universal obedience due His crown.

Early in the present century—1803—a very powerful contribution to the Covenanted cause came from the pen of Rev. S. B. Wylie, entitled, "The Sons of Oil." The American Church of the Covenanters was then in her cradle, and the unpopularity of her principles seemed to indicate that she

might die of "cholera infantum." Hostile elements within and without threatened her speedy dissolution. American Independence had been gained, and the crown of sovereign citizenship glittered more brilliantly in the eyes of the people than a royal diadem on the head of any British ruler, and to breast the political tide required superhuman strength. Reformation principles were submerged under a sea of wild, patriotic enthusiasm. At this juncture young Samuel B. Wylie, like a champion, leaped forward in defence of the Divine principles of civil government, giving a Scriptural argument which echoed through the land like peals of thunder. This was a most opportune vindication of the position of the Covenanters. The little book acted like a tonic upon the infant, and like a battery of blazing artillery upon her enemies.

Three years afterward, the Reformed Presbytery, feeling the vigour of maturer life, and nerved with power in quality like that which sustained their forefathers, lifted up their ensign, publishing a new edition of their Testimony, with a historical view of the Christian Church, "as a testimony of thankfulness to God for His goodness to His Covenanted people, and of their appreciation of the faithful contendings of the saints." Here they erected their memorial stone, and wrote on it "Ebenezer."

During the conflict of 1812 with Great Britain, Dr. A. M'Leod delivered his famous war sermons, which shortly appeared in a volume having much demand. In these the Scriptural principles of civil government received further illumination by the flashes of his eloquence uniting with the flashes of battle. War is always a calamity, yet with some mitigating effects. On the blackness of this calamity, the preacher painted his sublime conceptions of human and Divine rights in bright colours. The mind of the public was at fever heat and very impressible. You recall the occasion. Some time previous to that date, America, Great Britain's own precious

child, had been a little self-willed, and her mother thought to administer a correction. The correction was not received with grace, and the daughter declared she would keep house for herself. When she had reached her majority and a little more—perhaps in the flush of health, beauty, and pride—she seemed to be a little overbearing again, and the queenly parent undertook again to use the rod. The daughter was too large to be whipped. They are now good friends.

Much of the Covenanter literature is controversial. The defence of the Royal claims of Christ is a trust which Covenanters have accepted as peculiarly committed to them. The sovereignty of Jesus, most practical in all its bearings, they regard as central among all truths, and worthy of proclamation and support at any cost. They have grasped this doctrine with almost a military spirit, being convinced that it has been placed in their custody by a Providential appointment, announced with the voice of a trumpet that waxed louder and louder amidst the fire-laden clouds that hovered over the hills of Scotland for centuries. Around this central truth, and all others springing from it, this Church is entrenched in holy covenant, bound by oath not to abandon the field, but committing the charge from parents to children, to continue the service under the “perpetual obligation,” till the Lord come in His power, subduing all nations and filling the world with His glory.

The spirit of controversy finds an illustration in the work of Dr. J. R. Willson, entitled “Historical Sketch of Opinions on the Atonement.” The introduction says:—“The author has been advised by some whose counsel deserves attention to deal very gently with errorists. Nothing would have better accorded with his feelings, could he have believed that truth would be as effectually promoted by pursuing this course. This he could not believe. The Apostles and Reformers thought and acted differently from this advice. He has also been advised by those on whose opinion he has placed

more reliance, to speak out with boldness and candour. He has done so. Whatever the friends of 'moderation' may think, he hopes he shall never regret what he has done. We should know men as well as doctrines, and, under this conviction, he has not spared to mention names and Churches freely. Those who are advancing require gentleness; those who are departing from the faith merit even severity."

Some American literature of the Covenanters is exegetical and devotional. A fine specimen is found in the volume which has recently come from the pen of Dr. James Kennedy. This book is entitled "Christ in the Song." The quality and substance are suggestively presented in one sentence: "The Song in its figurative language and descriptions may be compared to an ornamental lamp or beautiful transparency; but as the beauties of these are not seen till the light is put in, so it is Christ in the Song that gives it its glory and beauty."

Periodicals began in the early years of the Church, and have ever since been flowing in branching streams. The "American Expositor" (Dr. A. M'Leod, editor) may be taken as a representative of the monthlies. It was authorized by the Synod of 1831. The controversy which split the Church into halves was then growing fierce. Many were weary of political dissent and separation. They strove to lift the Church from her solid foundation and plunge her members into the seething politics of a Godless government. The magazine was born for adversity. The spirit and purpose were revealed in the opening sentences: "We are set for the defence of the Gospel. New exertions in every good cause shall be encouraged. But while assiduously cultivating that charity that rejoiceth not in iniquity but rejoiceth in the truth, we shall keep our eye toward the Sun of Righteousness, discarding new light, doctrines, usages, and ordinances of religious worship not committed to the saints by the Word of God." After this "The Reformed Presbyterian" appeared; then "The Covenanter," and in time these were combined.

All have now disappeared. "The Herald of Mission News" is at present our only monthly.

The Civil War of 1861-5 marked a new epoch in the Covenanter literature of America. Slavery then existed; it was rooted in the national Constitution. Covenanters were uncompromising abolitionists. They gave emphatic testimony against the wrong, and them who practized it, and the Government that sustained it. They could take no part in a Government so guilty. But when slavery was abolished, when the chains of the slaves were melted in the furnace of judgment, and moulded into cannon, shot, and canister for their spoilers, some Covenanters found no longer any barrier in the way of their political aspirations. They shut their eyes to the infidelity of the Government that denied Christ's authority over the nations, and the supremacy of His law in civil affairs. The crisis aroused the Church. Her latent powers were called into action. The faithful grew zealous for Reformation principles. They determined to apply those principles to political life, till the nation should give Constitutional proof of loyalty to King Jesus. In this season of travail the Church gave birth to "The Christian Statesman." It was the first weekly journal of power and permanence among the Covenanters. It received strong support, grew rapidly in influence, became recognized as a fearless champion and a judicious counsellor in the work of reform, under the editorial care of Drs. D. McAllister and T. P. Stevenson. The tone and mission of this weekly could not be misunderstood in the light of its first pages. We quote a few sentences from the pen of Dr. J. R. W. Sloane, showing the confidence and courage with which it entered upon its mission:—"The demon of infidelity has entered into our statesmen, if, indeed, we have any worthy of the name, and must be exorcised. This miserable, shallow philosophy of government, which would make it a mere human contrivance with no higher aim than the protection of person and property, has had its day and wrought sufficient mischief. It must be met with deeper

philosophy and confronted by arguments more convincing than any in its magazine, and this nascent and yet plastic nation moulded after a higher ideal of national character and life than any that the world has yet known."

"The Christian Nation," another weekly, appeared on the Covenanter's horizon in the year 1884, commending itself to the people both by fidelity and merit, under the guidance of Mr. John W. Pritchard, editor, until it received the endorsement of Synod. And it never had a palmier day than now. Its integrity was severely tried in the conflict of 1891, yet it was found to be morally immovable, editorially honourable, and with courage sufficient. Its loyalty to Jesus and the Covenant became manifest in the first issue, in which the following words are found:—"Supremacy over the Church is Christ's right, yet not His right in full; it is His glory, yet not His glory complete; a crown for His brow, yet not His only crown; His regal title covers all creation. His right hand sways a sceptre over the nation as truly as over the Church, and the splendours of His Royalty should shine through civil government as they shine through ecclesiastical government.

"The Christian Reformer" is another weekly of recent origin finding a pleasant reception in our homes, bringing choice reading and fresh news.

Christ's Royal greatness is the central truth of all truths in the eyes of the genuine Covenanter. It is the luminary that fills space with light, and holds each orb in its circular path. Around the throne of the risen Lord the universe moves; every creature is subject and subservient. They who make this doctrine their view-point will behold sublimest harmony through the vast domain of God, notwithstanding the local swirls that prevail on our planet; will have such a view of the moral kingdom as Sir Isaac Newton had of the natural, differing only in its matchless sublimity.

The Covenanters take their position here. They view all things in relation to King Jesus, as anointed by the Father

and invested with supreme authority. Whatsoever recognizes this Throne and honours this King is right; whatsoever fails to do this is wrong, immoral, injurious to man and offensive to God, and must be restored to right relation or destroyed. According to this standpoint of right, Covenanters give their testimony. "Expediency" is a word not found in their vocabulary.

This position has given colour and character to the writings of the Covenanters. Literature springing from such a source must necessarily possess certain qualities. What are some of these qualities?

1. A spirit of confidence. Taking their stand beside the Eternal Throne, having a view of its stability and omnipotence, apprehending the plan of the Infinite mind, and feeling the power of the invisible world, how can they doubt for a moment the success of Christ's kingdom or hesitate in declaring all the truth concerning it? All opposing elements must eventually be like chaff in the wind or snow-flakes on the sea. Their positiveness is sometimes abrupt as the mountain that thrusts its massive cliffs upon the ocean with earnestness that can offer no apology.

2. An inspiration to publish the Royal claims of Jesus with strong emphasis. With the glory of the King breaking like sunlight upon their faces, while they gaze upon His merits as the crucified and risen Redeemer, feeling the power of His presence and the awe of His dreadful majesty, inspired by the heroic examples of their ancestors, and urged by the voice that comes from martyr-graves to be true to His claims, how can they do otherwise than give free utterance to His regal rights and superlative glory?

3. A willingness to testify against all disloyalty to King Jesus. Imbued with the principle of His rightful sovereignty, having experience of the beneficence of His reign, assured that all resistance is both wicked and suicidal, they must be jealous for His Throne and exclaim against treason wherever found in His realms. Whether found in Church or

State, the authority that bows not to this King in humble obedience dares God and works out its own ruin.

4. Readiness to advocate all truth even in its most unpopular application. Their Covenant binds to accept the Bible with all its doctrines. Many Gospel truths are sweet to all Christians; multitudes sustain such as are pleasant at sight and involve no sacrifice; great armies rally where there is no danger. Therefore Covenanters, while they intentionally abandon none, have felt constrained by the love of Christ to concentrate their strength upon such truths as are imperilled in the issues of their times.

5. Cheerfulness in service and sacrifice for the Lord. No pessimist may march in the Covenanter ranks. No happier people ever lived than the Covenanters of Scotland in their most dreadful days. The mountain fastnesses rang with their melodies; their hearts melted with thankfulness; in banishment, in prison, and on the scaffold their joy often arose to the point of ecstasy; their dying testimony is full of the transports of praise. No room for gloom in the Covenanter's heart. Their vision of the future is clear; they know that though the years to come may be dark, though the nations be perplexed and great distress prevail, order will yet return and the world will again appear in beauty and fruitfulness as in her pristine glory. The Covenanted Church sings not the song of the dying swan but the song of the lark that arises high above all shadows of night, to see the sun coming forth in majesty above the horizon, while it is not yet day on the plains below.

The literature of such a band of Christians must of necessity be imbued with their own spirit and coloured with their character. Therefore it mingles the controversial with the pastoral, the doctrinal with the practical, the fire of the law with the dew of the Gospel. Their meadows where the flocks feed and the impregnable fortresses where contested truths are defended are separated by no line fence. Their writers have opened up the rich fields of doctrine for the

nourishing of souls, and likewise have shown the world that the days of polemics are not all past; neither will they be ended till every moral issue is settled in harmony with the Throne of King Jesus.

Perhaps this will account for the internal controversies among Covenanters which at times arise and occasionally become almost internecine. Sensitive to the least appearance of error, and jealous of the diamond truths that sparkle in the crown of their Lord, they are doubly sensitive when error makes its appearance in this Church, and doubly jealous when truth is wounded in the house of oath-bound friends.

The Testimony of the Covenanters, which they strive to publish by voice and press, is the same in spirit and power which our honoured progenitors upheld at the cost of their lives on the high places of Scotland. Often has it drawn the fire of the foe. On Pentland Hills, at Drumclog, at Bothwell Bridge, at Rutherglen, at Sanquhar, at Lanark, and many other historical places, it braved the rage of kingdoms. Nor is the conflict yet over. A season of peace has been granted. The four angels are holding the four winds that they hurt not the garden of the Lord. But the great battle for Christ's claims is yet to be fought. The same testimony is yet to be sustained, while the ungodly forces of earth and all hell converge their armies and direct their artillery upon it. The Day of the Lord, His Great Day, is clearly marked on the calendar of the future. Indications point to its nearness. Covenanters have no time for leisure, hesitancy, or debate. It is high time to gird on the harness. Let him that hath a sword grasp it. Let all stand in readiness for the shaking of the Heavens and the earth. Our testimony will doubtless carry us into conflict and carnage beyond our wildest conjectures.

Marshal Saxe relates how fear and courage struggled in his soul on the battlefield. As the cannon opened fire he trembled. Looking at his quaking body, he said: "Aha! tremblest thou? Thou wouldest tremble much more if thou

knewest whither I mean to carry thee this day." And he carried it into the thickest of the fight, where officers and comrades lay in swaths of dead. Covenanters may tremble as signal temptations spring upon them; yet let them show the dauntless spirit that will laugh their own weakness to scorn, in view of what shall be endured ere they finish their testimony, and of the omnific grace that will carry them into conflict where the battle rages in its wildest fierceness.

The literature of the Covenanters of America has been published in almost every form, appearing as quarterlies, monthlies, and weeklies, leaflets, tracts, and pamphlets, and volumes small and great. The later writings are of milder spirit, less controversial, more devotional. Does this indicate a decay of athletic strength in the maintenance of principle and in opposing error? Does it betray a lack of spiritual sensitiveness and a willingness to dwell at ease in Zion, even while her walls are not yet built nor her palaces completed? Gladly would we account for it, if facts sustained the conclusion, by a more copious inflowing of the Holy Spirit, melting away our asperities, sweetening Church life, and enriching personal character.

The books treating on various subjects may be classified as follows:—

"Civil Government and its Relations to the Throne of Jesus,"	6 vols.
"Devotional and Doctrinal," - - - - -	7 vols.
"The Distinctive Principles of the Reformed Presbyterian Church," - - - - -	6 vols.
"Defence of the True Psalmody," - - - - -	4 vols.
"Exposition of Portions of Scripture," - - - - -	2 vols.
"Biography," - - - - -	2 vols.
"Controversies on Open Communion," "Instrumental Music," "The Diaconate," "The Atonement," "Baptism," "The Sabbath," each - - - - -	1 vol.
"Systematic Theology," "History and Poetry," each - - -	1 vol.

During the first quarter of the century six volumes were issued; second quarter, six; third quarter, ten; and in twenty years of the fourth quarter, fifteen.

We submit a list of the volumes and authors, which may be found complete; in all 40 volumes and 26 authors:—

"Sons of Oil,"	- - - -	Rev. S. B. Wylie,	- 81	1803
"The Reformed Presbyterian Testimony,"	- - - -	Presbytery,	- - 252	1807
"Principal Prophecies of the Revelation,"	- - - -	Dr. A. M'Leod,	- 480	1814
"Sermons on the War of 1814,"	- - - -	Dr. A. M'Leod,	- 235	1815
"Sketches and Opinions on the Atonement,"	- - - -	Dr. J. M. Willson,	- 351	1817
"Reply to Mason on Open Communion,"	- - - -	Dr. James Christie,	- 212	1821
"Inspiration of The Word,"	- - - -	Dr. A. M'Leod,	- 528	1827
"Submission to the Powers that be,"	- - - -	Dr. W. L. Roberts,	- 140	1828
"The Christian Church,"	- - - -	Dr. A. M'Leod,	- 144	1831
"The Deacon,"	- - - -	Dr. J. M. Willson,	- 76	1841
"Distinctive Principles of the R. P. Church,"	- - - -	Dr. David Scott,	- 324	1841
"Bible Magistracy,"	- - - -	Dr. J. M. Willson,	- 122	1842
"Reply to Morton on Psalmody,"	- - - -	Dr. R. G. Dodds,	- 140	1851
"The Psalms,"	- - - -	Dr. G. M'Master,	- 223	1852
"The Reformed Presbyterian Catechism,"	- - - -	Dr. W. L. Robert,	- 188	1853
"Civil Government,"	- - - -	Dr. J. M. Willson,	- 162	1853
"The Exclusive Claims of the Psalms,"	- - - -	Dr. Wm. Sommerville,	189	1850
"Memoirs of Dr. A. M'Leod,"	- - - -	Dr. S. B. Wylie,	- 535	1855
"The True Psalmody, compilation,"	- - - -	Dr. J. M. Willson,	- 280	1855
"True Godliness,"	- - - -	Dr. A. M'Leod,	- 280	1860
"Nature and Administration of Baptism,"	- - - -	Dr. Wm. Sommerville,	319	1866
"Instrumental Music in Public Worship,"	- - - -	Dr. R. Johnstone,	- 80	1870
"Memorial Volume of Covenant Renovation,"	- - - -	By the Synod,	- 236	1872
"Wayside Flowers" (Poetry),	- - - -	Miss Sallie Carson,	- 163	1880
"Prelections on Theology,"	- - - -	Dr. T. Sproull,	- 455	1882
"Atonement and Law,"	- - - -	Rev. J. M. Armour,	- 240	1885
"Divine Method of Life,"	- - - -	Rev. J. M. Armour,	- 244	1887
"Life and Work of J. R. W. Sloane,"	- - - -	By His Son,	- 440	1888
"History of the R. P. Church of America,"	- - - -	Rev. W. M. Glasgow,	788	1883

"Revised Version of the Psalms,"	-	Synod's Committee,	-	—	1888
"Manual of Civil Government,"	-	Dr. D. McAllister,	-	313	1890
"Christ in the Song,"	-	Dr. James Kennedy,	-	352	1890
"Reformation Principles,"	-	Rev. J. M. Foster,	-	448	1890
"Mercy—Its Place in Divine Gov-					
ernment,"	-	Rev. J. M. Armour,	-	244	1891
"The Witnessing Church,"	-	Rev. J. M. Foster,	-	233	1891
"The 'Liberal' Trial of 1891,"	-	Stenographic Report,		543	1892
"The Covenanters in America,"	-	Rev. J. C. McFeeters,		234	1892
"White Robes,"	-	Rev. D. McFall,	-	250	1892
"The Sabbath,"	-	{Rev. S. J. Crowe,	-}	153	1895
		{Rev. J. H. Leiper,	-}		
"Christian Citizenship,"	-	{Rev. J. C. McFeeters,	-}	95	1895
		{Prof. J. R. Dill,	-}		

Professor Willson, D.D., Allegheny: Attention to the literature of the Church is of great importance. Before leaving home, I looked over all the books I had relating to the troubles in Scotland during the persecuting period, that I might bring some books for reading on the voyage across the seas, and I selected the "Cloud of Witnesses." This I preferred for this reason—that it was far more important to hear what men said than to read stories about them, or what others have said of their principles and sufferings. Whilst admitting the excellency of the later literature of imagination and history united, I advise parents to put on their shelves in their homes such books as "The Scots Worthies," the "Cloud of Witnesses," "Homes, Haunts, and Battlefields of the Covenanters." Better have poorer clothes and valuable books than fine clothes and little or no valuable literature.

Rev. Dr. McAllister, Pittsburgh: The arduous labours required in the preparation of the papers read can be, in some measure, estimated by those who have endeavoured to make themselves acquainted with the whole range of literature of the Covenanters. In personal investigations of this kind many years ago, these papers would have proved to myself most valuable aids; and in days to come such an admirable presentation as we have had of the literature of the Scotch

and Irish Churches will be prized, not only in Great Britain, but also in America. The limits of these papers, as a matter of course, forbade an exhaustive treatment of the subject. It may be suggested, however, in view of the practical service to be rendered to posterity by the publication of these papers, that the most important gaps should be filled. For example, the view of American Covenanter periodical literature must be quite incomplete that does not find a place for honoured mention of "The Evangelical Witness" and "The Albany Quarterly," to say nothing of the first effort to establish a weekly newspaper under the name of "The Christian Statesman," nearly half-a-century before the present journal of that name was inaugurated. It is to be hoped that these and some other omissions may be filled up before the Memorial Volume of this Convention goes to press.

Rev. John Lynd, Belfast: The papers to which we have listened are most interesting, and will be serviceable as guides to those who wish to study any part of the Church's literature. It appears that a large part of this has been of a controversial kind. But the non-controversial has not been wanting, and some of it has been held in highest esteem by brethren in other Churches. The Rev. Wm. Guthrie of Fenwick wrote a little work, entitled "The Christian's Great Interest." Of this work one gentleman in Belfast has collected nineteen different editions, and can tell of several other editions. One who was no mean theologian says of this book that it contains more theology than all the volumes he had himself written. A work of this kind may fairly claim a place in Covenanting literature. "The Christian Statesman," edited for thirty years by two of our brethren from the United States—Drs. Stevenson and McAllister—has not devoted much space to controversy over Distinctive Principles and Practices of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, but it has exercised an incalculable influence in creating and extending Spiritual views regarding the obligations of the nation to the King of kings,

and the conditions of national well-being. Few of Spurgeon's sermons deal with the peculiar doctrines of the Baptist Church, but any sketch of Baptist Literature would be wanting which did not give them a place. They, the non-controversial works generally, have a value for multitudes who are but little interested in this or that particular controversy.

PSALM CXLV.

(The second version was by John Craig, colleague of Knox.)

I'LL thee extol, my God, O King;
I'll bless Thy name always.
Thee will I bless each day, and will
Thy name for ever praise.

Great is the Lord, much to be prais'd,
His greatness search exceeds.
Race unto race shall praise Thy works
And show Thy mighty deeds.

I of Thy glorious majesty
The honour will record;
I'll speak of all Thy mighty works,
Which wondrous are, O Lord.

Rev. Dr. Stevenson, Philadelphia, pronounced the Benediction.

Convention resumed at 3 o'clock.

Mr. William Reid, Newtownards, presided.

PSALM XVI.

(The last Scripture read by M'Kail, the Martyr.)

GOD is of mine inheritance
And cup the portion;
The lot that fallen is to me
Thou dost maintain alone.

Unto me happily the lines
In pleasant places fell;
Yea, the inheritance I got
In beauty doth excel.

I bless the Lord because He doth
By counsel me conduct;
And in the seasons of the night
My reins do me instruct.

Before me still the Lord I set
Sith it is so that He
Doth ever stand at my right hand,
I shall not moved be.

Because of this my heart is glad,
And joy shall be express
Ev'n by my glory; and my flesh
In confidence shall rest.

Thou wilt me shew the path of life,
Of joys there is full store
Before thy face; at Thy right hand
Are pleasures evermore.

Rev. G. A. Edgar, Olathe, Kansas, led in prayer.

The Chairman said: This is an age of Conventions. It is fitting that the Covenanting Church should have her Convention too. It is the first of the kind ever held, unique in its way, but I hope not the last. But if we are to have similar Conventions in the future, we must make it practical. This is a utilitarian age, and looks at everything in a practical