



CENTENNIAL

OF THE

New Alexandria Reformed Presbyterian Church

Pittsburgh Presbytery

OCTOBER 11, 1916

1816

1916



New Alexandria

157

HISTORY

OF THE

Reformed Presbyterian Church
of New Alexandria, Pa.

From Its Organization September 16, 1816, to
September 16, 1916.

By J. CALVIN ELDER-- 1816 to 1868
J. OLIVER BEATTY— 1868 to 1916

REV. D. C. MATTHEWS, Pastor.
Present Pastor.

"Lord thou hast been our dwelling place through all generations."

"A thousand years in Thy sight are but as yesterday."

Letter written in 1859 by Rev. A. M. Milligan to Capt. John Brown while he was in prison in Charleston, Virginia, a short time before he was hanged. Also the reply of Capt. John Brown.

New Alexandria, Westmoreland County, Pa.,
November 24, 1859.

Captain John Brown,

Dear Sir:—Permit a stranger to address you. I am a humble pastor of a congregation of people known as Scotch Covenanters—a people who refuse to incorporate with this government by holding its offices, or by using its elective franchise, on the ground that it fails to perform the duty required of government either to God or man. It neither acknowledges the authority of God nor protects the persons of its subjects, and we do not acknowledge it to be the moral ordinance of God for good to man, to be obeyed for conscience sake.

I do not address you from the expectation that you need any promptings to that fortitude which you have so nobly displayed, and which I doubt not is begotten in your soul by the Spirit of God through a good conscience and a good cause. I have no fears but that your familiarity with the Word of God and the way to the Throne, will fortify your heart against the foul aspersions cast upon your character and motives by purchased presses and parrot pulpits. He that fears God properly need fear no other. Still, I know that the bravest heart may be cheered in the midst of its sore trials by a kindly word from even a stranger, and while you “are surrounded by the bulls of Bashan,” it may be some consolation to you to know that there are some orthodox and earnest Christians who regard you as a martyr to civil liberty, and pray for a large outpouring of the martyr spirit upon you, and feel that in such a cause ’tis glorious to die.

Whatever prudence may whisper in regard to the best course, God requires us to “remember them that are in bonds as bound with them,” Heb. xiii, 3. “Execute ye judgment and righteousness, and deliver the spoiled out of the hand of the

oppressor," Jer. xxii, 3. And the Apostle John¹ declares that "we know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. But whoso hath this world's goods and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him: 1 John iii, 14, 17. If these are the proper tests of Christianity, I think at least you have no reason to fear a comparison of character, in that respect, with your clerical traducers.

But, my dear sir, you will allow me to urge upon you a rigid inquiry into your motives, to know whether you have taken up the cross for Christ's sake as well as for the sake of his oppressed people. If you have made all the sacrifice for Christ's and his cause's sake, you have the promise of a hundredfold more in the present life, and in the world to come life everlasting. Your character will be a hundredfold more than redeemed, and a hundredfold better legacy will accrue to your family than you could otherwise have left them. I know that your mind is deeply exercised in behalf of the slave, but I would suggest to you another feature of the "irrepressible conflict" on which you may not have bestowed so much thought: God's controversy with this nation for dishonor done to his majesty. This nation, in its Constitution, makes no submission to the King of Kings—pays no regard to the requirements of His law—never mentions his name even in the inauguration oath of its chief magistrate.

God has said He will turn the wicked into hell and all the nations that forget God, Ps. ix, 17. To His Son, the Messiah, He says, "The nation and kingdom that will not serve Thee shall perish: yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted," Isa. lx., 12.

If you must die a witness for the "inalienable rights" of man, I desire that you would also set the seal of your blood to a noble testimony for the supreme authority and outraged majesty of God, and with your expiring breath call upon this guilty nation not only "let God's people go," but also to serve God with fear and kiss His Son, lest He be angry," Ps. ii, 11, 12.

You have been called before judges and it has been "given you what to say and how to speak;" and I pray that when you are called "to witness a good confession before many witnesses," there may be given you dying words that

will scathe and burn in the heart of this great and guilty nation, until their oppression of men and treason against God shall be clean purged out. Noble man! you are highly favored of God—you are raised to a high, commanding eminence, even though it be a scaffold, where every word you utter reaches the farthest corner of the land. Samsonlike, you will slay more Philistines in your death than you ever did or could in a long life; and I pray God that in your dying agony you may have the gratification of feeling the pillars of Dagon's temple crumbling in your grasp. Oh! feel that you are a great actor on a world-wide stage—that you have a most important part to play, and that while you are suffering for God He will take care of you. He sends none a warfare on their own charges. Fear not to die. Look on the scaffold not as a curse but as an honor, since it has been sanctified by Christ. It is no longer “cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree”—that curse was borne by Jesus—but “blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

I still entertain the lingering hope, that this nation will not add to its already full cup of crime the blood of your judicial murder; and I pray God “to hear the groaning of the prisoner, and to loose those that are appointed to death.” I wish to be understood as addressing your companions through you. Should this reach you will you gratify me by informing me of that fact? I greatly desire to know more of one in whom I feel so deep an interest.

That you may be safely carried through and “saved from death,” or what is better, “saved in death,” is the prayer of,

Yours for Christ and the slave,

A. M. MILLIGAN.

Charlestown, Jefferson County, Va.,

November 29, 1859.

My Dear Covenanter Friend:—Notwithstanding I now get daily more than three times the number of kind letters I can possibly answer, I cannot deny myself the satisfaction of saying a few words to a stranger, whose feelings and whose judgment so nearly coincide with my own. No letter of a great number I have got to cheer, encourage and advise, me, have given me more heart warming satisfaction or better counsel than your own. I hope to profit by it, and

I am greatly obliged for your visit to my prison. It really seemed to impart new strength to my soul, notwithstanding I was very cheerful before. I trust, dear brother, that God, in infinite grace and mercy for Christ's sake, will "neither leave me nor forsake me," till I have shown His power to this generation, and His strength to every one that is to come."

I would most gladly commune further as we journey on. but I am so near the close of mine that I must break off, however reluctant.

Farewll, my faithful brother in Christ Jesus; farewll.

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Your friend,
JOHN BROWN.