



HISTORY

OF THE

Reformed Presbyterian Church

IN

AMERICA:

WITH SKETCHES OF ALL HER MINISTRY, CONGREGATIONS,
MISSIONS, INSTITUTIONS, PUBLICATIONS, Etc.,
AND EMBELLISHED WITH OVER
FIFTY PORTRAITS AND
ENGRAVINGS.

BY

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BALTIMORE:
HILL & HARVEY, PUBLISHERS.
1888.

UNDERTAKEN with the approval of the Synod of the Reformed
Presbyterian Church in America, and by a resolution passed in its
session at Newburgh, New York, June 8, 1887.

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1888.

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WHEREAS, The social relations formed by membership in these orders must therefore be artificial and false, and the performance of the duties imposed by their obligations an injustice to all outside, including the families of members; and

WHEREAS, Secrecy, which is an essential feature of these orders, however justifiable in exceptional circumstances, is in all ordinary cases needless, opposed to candor, unworthy of a benevolent enterprise, and unscriptural; and

WHEREAS, These orders become to many of the members a church and their ritual and services virtually a religion, and thus not only tend, as proved by fact, to keep men from uniting with the Church, but also induce professing Christians to abandon her; and

WHEREAS, In many of these orders the members are bound together by oaths, horrible in themselves, and administered by no civil or ecclesiastical authority, and may thus become ready instruments in the hands of designing leaders for the overthrow of our civil and religious liberties; therefore,

Resolved, 1. That we emphatically condemn all these orders as wrong in principle and necessarily injurious in their operation.

2. That it is as much the duty of the Church to prohibit the connection of her members with these orders as to forbid their participation in a system of rebellion or oppression.

3. That in view of the advocacy of Secret Orders by influential papers, and even by respected Christian men and ministers, we pledge ourselves to labor for the thorough agitation of the subject, believing that a clearer understanding of their character and influences will lead to the withdrawal of their most effective support.

There was a general and earnest desire upon the part of the Church to now go forward with the act of Covenanting, and definite arrangements were made to enter upon this important work at the next meeting.

The Synod of 1871, met in the city of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. It is the most notable meeting because during its sessions the Synod entered into the solemn act of Covenanting. The "bond" of the Covenant

and the "Confession of Sins" had been overtured by the Church. This important event in the history of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in America took place in the Pittsburgh Church, May 27, 1871, after a sermon on "Covenanting" by Rev. Andrew Stevenson, D. D. Rev. James M. Beattie then read the Covenant, Rev. J. R. W. Sloane, D. D., addressed the Synod on "The Spirit in which we should Covenant," and Rev. Thomas Sproull, D. D., offered prayer. After a few moments of silent prayer, the Covenant-oath was taken by the members of Synod and others who joined them. The Covenant was then again read by Rev. Thomas Sproull, D. D., and at the close of each section all responded "Amen." At the close of the last section all repeated in concert Exodus 24: 7, "All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient." The Covenant was then subscribed by seventy-four ministers, seventy elders, and by five licentiates, four students of theology, and nineteen elders not members of the Synod at that session. After the bond was signed, the Rev. William Milroy delivered an address on "Covenant-keeping," and the service closed by singing Psalm 72: 17-19.

As the proceedings of this memorable occasion have been preserved to the Church in the "Memorial Volume," it is thought proper to insert nothing in this volume but the Covenant itself, in order that this sacred bond may meet the eye of the casual reader.

COVENANT.

"We, Ministers, Elders, Deacons, and Members of the
REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA,

with our hands lifted up, do jointly and severally swear by the Great and Dreadful Name of the LORD OUR GOD:

1. "That coming into the presence of the Lord God with a deep conviction of His awful majesty and glory, of His omniscience, His purity, His justice and His grace; of our guilt and total depravity by nature, and our utter inability to save ourselves from deserved condemnation to everlasting punishment; with renunciation of all dependence on our own righteousness as the ground of pardon and acceptance with God, we receive for ourselves and for our children the Lord Jesus Christ as He is offered in the Gospel, to be our Saviour—the Holy Spirit to be our Enlightener, Sanctifier and Guide—and God, the Father, to be our everlasting portion; we approve and accept of the Covenant of Grace as all our salvation and desire, and take the moral law as dispensed by the Mediator, Christ, to be the rule of our life, and to be obeyed by us in all its precepts and prohibitions. Aiming to live for the glory of God as our chief end, we will, in reliance upon God's grace, and feeling our inability to perform any spiritual duty in our own strength, diligently attend to searching the Scriptures, religious conversation, the duties of the closet, the household, the fellowship meeting and the sanctuary, and will seek in them to worship God in spirit and in truth. We do solemnly promise to depart from all iniquity, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, commending and encouraging, by our example, temperance, charity and godliness.

2. "That after careful examination, having embraced the system of faith, order and worship revealed in the Holy Scriptures, and summarized as to doctrine in the Westminster Confession and Catechisms, and Reformed Presbyterian Testimony, and, as to order and worship, justly set forth in substance and outline in the Westminster Form of Church Government and Directory for Worship, we do publicly profess and own this as the true Christian faith and religion, and the system of order and worship appointed by Christ for His own house, and, by the grace of God, we will sincerely and constantly endeavor to understand it more fully, to hold and observe it in its integrity, and to transmit the knowledge of the same to posterity. We solemnly reject whatever is known by us to be contrary to the Word of God, our recognized and approved manuals of faith and order, and the great principles of the Protestant Reformation. Particularly, we abjure and condemn Infidelity, under all its various aspects; Atheism, or the denial of the divine existence; Pantheism, with its denial of the divine personality; Naturalism, with its denial of the divine Providential Government; Spiritualism, with its denial of the Bible redemption; Indifferentism, with its denial of man's responsibility; Formalism, with its denial of the power of godliness. We abjure and condemn Popery, with its arrogant assumption of supremacy and infallibility; its corrupt and heretical teachings; its dogma of the Immaculate Conception; its hostility to civil and religious liberty, to the progress of society in civilization and intelligence, and especially its denial, in

common with Infidelity, of the right and duty of the State to educate in morality and religion by the use of the Bible in schools enjoying its patronage and support. Believing Presbyterianism to be the only divinely instituted form of government in the Christian Church, we disown and reject all other forms of ecclesiastical polity, as without authority of Scripture, and as damaging to purity, peace and unity in the household of faith. We reject all systems of false religion and will-worship, and with these all forms of secret oath-bound societies and orders, as ensnaring in their nature, pernicious in their tendency, and perilous to the liberties of both Church and State; and pledge ourselves to pray and labor according to our power, that whatever is contrary to godliness may be removed, and the Church beautified with universal conformity to the law and will of her Divine Head and Lord.

3. "Persuaded that God is the source of all legitimate power; that he has instituted civil government for His own glory and the good of man; that he has appointed His Son, the Mediator, to headship over the nations; and that the Bible is the supreme law and rule in national as in all other things, we will maintain the responsibility of nations to God, the rightful dominion of Jesus Christ over the commonwealth, and the obligation of nations to legislate in conformity with the written Word. 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; and by this, our oath, we are pledged to promote the interests

of public order and justice, to support cheerfully whatever is for the good of the commonwealth in which we dwell, and to pursue this object in all things not forbidden by the law of God, or inconsistent with public dissent from an unscriptural and immoral civil power. We will pray and labor for the peace and welfare of our country, and for its reformation 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 of the true Christian religion; and we will continue to refuse to incorporate by any act, with the political body, until this blessed reformation has been secured.

4. "That, believing the Church to be *one*, and that all the saints have communion with God and with one another in the same Covenant; believing, moreover, that schism and sectarianism are sinful in themselves, and inimical to true religion, and trusting that divisions shall cease, and the people of God become one Catholic Church over all the earth, we will pray and labor for the visible oneness of the Church of God in our own land and throughout the world, on the basis of truth and Scriptural order. Considering it a principal duty of our profession to cultivate a holy brotherhood, we will strive to maintain Christian friendship with pious men of every name, and to feel and act as one with all in every land who pursue this grand end. And, as a means of securing this great result, we will, by dissemination and application of the principles of truth herein professed and by cultivating and exercising Christian charity, labor to remove stumbling blocks,

and to gather into one the scattered and divided friends of truth and righteousness.

5. "Rejoicing that the enthroned Mediator is not only King in Zion, but King over all the earth, and recognizing the obligation of His command to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, and to teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, and resting with faith in the promise of His perpetual presence as the pledge of success, we hereby dedicate ourselves to the great work of making known God's light and salvation among the nations, and to this end will labor that the Church may be provided with an earnest, self-denying and able ministry. Profoundly conscious of past remissness and neglect, we will henceforth, by our prayers, pecuniary contributions and personal exertions, seek the revival of pure and undefiled religion, the conversion of Jews and Gentiles to Christ, that all men may be blessed in Him, and that all nations may call Him blessed.

6. "Committing ourselves with all our interests to the keeping of Him in whom we have believed: in faithfulness to our own vows, and to the Covenants of our fathers, and to our children whom we desire to lead in the right ways of the Lord; and in love to all mankind, especially the household of faith in obedience to the commandment of the everlasting God to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, we will bear true testimony in word and in deed for every known part of divine truth, and for all the ordinances appointed by Christ in his king-

dom; and we will tenderly and charitably, but plainly and decidedly, oppose and discountenance all and every known error, immorality, neglect or perversion of divine institutions. Taking as our example the faithful in all ages, and, most of all, the blessed Master himself, and with our eye fixed upon the great cloud of witnesses who have sealed with their blood the testimony which they held, we will strive to hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering, in hope of the crown of life which fadeth not away. Finally, we enter upon this solemn act of covenanting before the Omniscient God, with unfeigned purpose of paying our vow. All sinister and selfish ends and motives we solemnly disavow, and protest that we have no aim but the glory of God, and the present and everlasting welfare of immortal souls. And our prayer to God is and shall be, to strengthen us by His Holy Spirit to keep this our promise, vow and oath, and to bless our humble attempt to glorify His name and honor, His truth and cause with such success as will bring salvation to our own souls, the wider spread and triumph of truth and holiness, and the enlargement and establishment of the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, to whom, with the Father and the Spirit, one God be glory in the Church throughout all ages, world without end. AMEN."

With a very few exceptions, all the members of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in America entered into and subscribed this same Covenant in the respective congregations. The Rev. Samuel R. Galbraith was