

The Presbyterians in Scotland learned from their Bibles that the system of grace is the chief of God's works; that the saints are the salt of the earth, and Jesus is King of kings, and Lord of lords. Having organized the Church as the peculiar kingdom of the Redeemer, upon principles which maintained the exclusive headship of Christ, they demanded that the crown of the nation should be laid at the feet of Messiah. They required that the Church should not only be tolerated to establish her distinct ecclesiastical organization, but that she should hereafter be supported by the civil power of the nation in the enjoyment of her established rights.

*Reformation Principles Exhibited (1807)*

Let King JESUS reign, and let all his enemies be scattered. Amen.

*Covenanter Slogan*

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# The Reformed Presbyterian Church In America

**T**HE Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod, is an American church and can only be understood in the light of the historical development of Presbyterianism in America. Now there are in American Presbyterianism two distinct streams, both of which may be traced back to the Reformation in the British Isles, and more especially to that in Scotland. The one stream has its historical roots in the Presbyterian Churches of Britain—as well as in some of the Reformed Churches of the Continent—but especially in the established Church of Scotland. As such it constitutes the mainstream of American Presbyterianism as originally represented by the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America. The other, much smaller, stream flows from those Presbyterians dissenting from the established Church of Scotland, either from those Covenanters who refused to be included in the Revolutionary Settlement of 1690 or from the Seceders who formed the Associate Presbytery in 1733. The Seceders are represented in America by the various Associate Presbyterian Synods, most of whose members joined in 1858 to form the United Presbyterian Church, which in turn merged with the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A., in 1958 to form the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Thus the current UPUSA Church, like the RPCES is a combination of the two historical strands of American Presbyterianism—but a combination on a different basis and producing a very different sort of church! For help in unraveling

In 1965 certain elements of both of these streams combined to form the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod. The larger body in the merger was the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, which traces its historical roots back through the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. The smaller body was the old Reformed Presbyterian Church, General Synod, whose roots go back to the Covenanter tradition. This chapter and the next deal with the history of the old Reformed Presbyterian Church in America, whereas the succeeding chapters (IV—VIII) trace the historical development of the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A., and the emergence of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church. The present chapter deals with the distinctive principles and history of the old Reformed Presbyterian Church in America from her origins in the Scottish Reformation to the publication of her Testimony and Terms of Communion in the early nineteenth century.

### **The Covenanted Reformation**

When Dr. Alexander McLeod—the most noted Reformed Presbyterian divine in early nineteenth century America—was once asked to identify his branch of the Presbyterian Church, he curtly replied that he belonged to no branch, but to the root.<sup>2</sup> This comment illustrates the deep sense of history underlying the religious consciousness of those who, whether in the British Isles or America, called themselves Reformed

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the various Presbyterian threads in Scotland and America, see the charts at the end of G. J. Slosser (ed.), *They Seek a Country: the American Presbyterians*, 1955. This work is one of the best introductions to the various aspects of the history of Presbyterianism in America. For an account of the various Presbyterian churches in Scotland up to the twentieth century, see C. G. McCrie, *The Church of Scotland: Her Divisions and Her Reunions*, 1901. Cf. the chart in the recent booklet by B. C. and J. W. George, *Church History*, Part One, 1969?, 2. This booklet is a helpful study guide to the distinctive Reformed Presbyterian heritage of the RPCEs. Cf. also the chart at the end of T. G. Cross, *Historical Background and Development of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod*, 1968. This booklet is a helpful brief introduction to the history behind the RPCEs.

2. As noted by his son, J. N. McLeod, *The Reformed Presbyterian Church: An Historical Sketch*, 1860, 33.

Presbyterians, and who are known to church history most commonly as Covenanters.<sup>3</sup> In order to understand this consciousness we must briefly take account of the distinctive character of the development of the Reformation in Scotland.

The Protestant Reformation came slowly to Scotland. As early as 1526 the first martyr, Patrick Hamilton, went to the stake speaking of that eternal life ‘which none shall possess that denies Christ Jesus before this wicked generation.’<sup>4</sup> However, it was not until 1560 that the Scottish Parliament declared Scotland a Reformed nation. This, the First Reformation in Scotland, was from the beginning thoroughly Protestant, Reformed, and Presbyterian. Its formal principle was the supreme authority of Scripture—so much so that a noted modern historian has remarked, ‘One can never understand the Scottish Reformation unless and until one recognizes that the ultimate authority of the Bible lay at its very foundation.’<sup>5</sup> Its doctrine is distinctively Reformed as evidenced by the Calvinistic Scottish Confession of 1560, which characteristically declares: ‘The cause of gude warkis, we confesse to be not our free wil, bot the Spirit of the Lord *Jesus*’ (XIII).<sup>6</sup> Its church polity is distinctively Presbyterian as evidenced by John Knox’s First Book of Discipline (1560). Knox, himself, never tired of maintaining that the Reformation in Scotland was more consistent and thorough than anywhere else, especially in matters of church polity.

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3. Other epithets are: Dissenters, Cameronians (after Richard Cameron), Mountain-Men (especially in Scotland), and Anti-Government Men. See *A Short Account of the Old Presbyterian Dissenters in Scotland, Ireland, and North America* (Published by Authority of Reformed Presbytery in Scotland, 1806), Glasgow (2nd ed.), 1824, 1 ff.

4. W. M. Hetherington, *History of the Church of Scotland*, 1852, 37. The literature on Scottish church history is vast, but this nineteenth century account is an old standby.

5. W. S. Reid, *The Scottish Reformation* (Addresses Observing the 400th Anniversary of the Reformation in Scotland), 1960, 32. For an excellent, readable account of the First Reformation, see A. M. Renwick, *The Story of the Scottish Reformation*, 1960. See also G. Donaldson, *The Scottish Reformation*, 1960.

6. For the text of this creed see P. Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, III, 463 ff. For a brief account of its historical context, see I, 680 ff.

However, the Scots not only conceived of their Reformation as more thorough, but also different in character from that in other lands. Theirs was distinctly a covenanted Reformation. The first band, or covenant, was transacted in 1556 under Knox's leadership. It was a solemn agreement among certain gentlemen to renounce Romanism and maintain the true preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ. In the century and a quarter which followed there were transacted nearly thirty more public covenants—some national, some local—to band together for the defense and advancement of the Reformed cause. To the Presbyterian Scots these covenants served as a standard for the defense and confirmation of the Gospel.<sup>7</sup>

The first National Covenant is sometimes called the Second Scottish Confession of 1580. In that it was underwritten by James VI, it is also called the King's Confession. It is also sometimes designated the Negative Confession because it is chiefly an anti-papal appendage to the more positive Confession of 1560. The Covenant condemns a long list of the pope's errors including 'all his tyrannous laws made upon indifferent things against our Christian liberty.'<sup>8</sup> The years which followed the National Covenant of 1580 saw the relentless efforts of a perjured James VI (James I of England) to destroy Presbyterianism in Scotland. The king came to the conclusion that presbytery and monarchy do not mix. Presbyterianism in the church was incompatible with his conception of monarchy in the state. Monarchy was best buttressed by Episcopalianism, and best undermined by Presbyterianism. To put the matter very simply, 'No bishop—no

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7. J. Lumsden, *The Covenants of Scotland*, 1914, 2, 12 f. This work gives an excellent historical account of each one of the Covenants.

8. See J. C. Johnston, *Treasury of the Covenant*, 1887, 48 f. Johnston is a goldmine of documentary and bibliographical information on the covenanting period. The text of the National Covenant of 1580 is also found in J. D. Douglas, *Light in the North: the Story of the Scottish Covenanters*, 1964, 197 ff. (Appendix D). This work is an excellent, recent study of the Covenanters and, because readily accessible, perhaps the first work to consult on the subject.

king.’ Thus James was bent upon forcing Anglican Prelacy upon the Scots. It was, most simply, a contest between James Stuart’s doctrine of the divine right of kings and Andrew Melville’s doctrine of the divine right of presbyters as expressed in the Second Book of Discipline (1578).

Charles I, more unscrupulous than his father, was just as determined to crush Presbyterianism in Scotland as he was Puritanism in England by forcing Anglo-Catholicism upon the two kingdoms. To the Scots the attempt to Catholicize their worship services with the new Book of Common Prayer of 1637 was the last straw. Their tumultuous reaction brought on what is known as the Second Reformation spanning the years 1638 to 1649. If the First Reformation was directed against Popery, the Second was in opposition to Prelacy. The chief documents of the Second Reformation are the National Covenant of 1638, the Solemn League and Covenant of 1643, and the products of the Westminster Assembly which sat from 1643 to 1649.

The National Covenant of 1638 is an appeal to the legally established religion of the land, a protest against all the religious innovations since 1580, and a solemn commitment to defend the true Reformed religion in the face of these innovations.<sup>9</sup> It was signed in person by some 300,000 Scots, and served as the basis of the reform of the Church carried through by the General Assembly of 1638, the first free General Assembly to be held in 36 years. As Charles I marched on Scotland in 1639, he proclaimed the document not so much a covenant as a ‘conspiracy.’<sup>10</sup>

The Solemn League and Covenant of 1643 is basically the result of the English Parliamentary Party’s need for the aid of the Scottish Covenanters in the civil war with Charles I and the Royalists; agreement to it was demanded of the English

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9. Douglas, 200 ff; cf. Johnston, 79 ff.

10. Johnston, 96. Cf. J. G. Vos, *The Scottish Covenanters: Their Origins, History and Distinctive Doctrines*, 1940, 37 f. This work, though rare, is perhaps the best short survey of Covenanter history.

Puritans as a condition of Covenanter support. The heart of the Covenant reads as follows:

We shall sincerely, really and constantly, through the grace of GOD, endeavour, in our several places and callings, the preservation of the reformed religion in the Church of Scotland, in doctrine, worship, discipline, and government, against our common enemies; the reformation of religion in the kingdoms of England and Ireland, in doctrine, worship, discipline, and government, according to the Word of GOD, and the example of the best reformed Churches; and shall endeavour to bring the Churches of GOD in the three kingdoms to the nearest conjunction and uniformity in religion, confession of faith, form of church government, directory for worship and catechising; that we, and our posterity after us, may as brethren, live in faith and love, and the Lord may delight to dwell in the midst of us.

Other duties to be performed are: ‘the extirpation of Popery, Prelacy, superstition, heresy, schism, profaneness, and whatsoever shall be found contrary to sound doctrine and the power of godliness;’ the preservations of the rights and privileges of Parliament and people; and the preservation and defense of the King’s person and authority.<sup>11</sup>

The Solemn League and Covenant was signed by many private individuals of all ranks of society in Scotland and England. It was also solemnly ratified by both the Scottish and English Parliaments, by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, and by the Westminster Assembly of Divines in England. Indeed, the very purpose of the Westminster Assembly, as convened by the English Parliament, came to be that of defining and securing uniformity of doctrine, worship, and government in the established churches of England, Scotland, and Ireland. To this end the Assembly, with assistance of commissioners from the Church of Scotland, produced the famous Confession of Faith, the Shorter and Larger Catechisms, the Directory for Public Worship, and

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 99. The Covenant closes with a confession of sins and an expression of ‘our true and unfeigned purpose, desire, and endeavour for ourselves, and all we owe to GOD and man, to amend our lives, and each one to go before another in the example of a real reformation; that the Lord may turn away his wrath and heavy indignation, and establish these churches and kingdoms in truth and peace.’ *Cf.* Douglas, 206 ff.

the Form of Church Government—all as parts of ‘the covenanted uniformity in religion betwixt the churches of Christ in the kingdoms of Scotland, England, and Ireland.’<sup>12</sup>

The Westminster Confession of Faith, in consonance with its original purpose, gives civil authority the right and duty to punish the public enemies of the true religion. Although the civil magistrate may not assume ecclesiastical functions, he is responsible for the suppression of blasphemy and heresy (WCF XXI, iv; XXIII; XXXI, ii; cf. WLC Q. 109). In 1647 the Confession was approved by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland with only two minor clarifications.<sup>13</sup> Thus the Westminster Confession superseded the Confession of 1560 as the official Confession of the Church of Scotland. Just about all of the official documents of the Westminster Assembly were ratified by the Scottish and English Parliaments in the years 1647 to 1649.

Despite these legal enactments, the Second Reformation in the British Isles was destined to be an ephemeral dream. Nevertheless, there were those in Scotland whose consciences, despite severe persecution, would not allow them to forget the vision which it embodied.

### **The Reformed Presbyterian Conscience**

In 1649 the Scottish Parliament passed the Act of Classes which declared that all those opposed to the Covenants (called Engagers and Malignants) were ineligible for public office or military service. Later in the year the Covenanters, on the basis of the Solemn League and Covenant, strongly disapproved of the execution of Charles I by the English

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12. *The Confession of Faith, etc.*, Issued by the Publications Committee of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, 1967, 11 f., 17 *et al.* Cf. Johnston, 105 ff.

13. The Assembly wanted to make clear, *first*, that the Confession’s silence on specific matters of Presbyterian church government should in no way prejudice the truth of Christ in such particulars to be found in the Form of Church Government; and, *second*, that the civil magistrates’ authority to call ecclesiastical assemblies on a regular basis must refer to churches not yet settled in their government, not to churches already constituted as Presbyterian churches. *Confession*, 14 f.

under Oliver Cromwell. Shortly thereafter Charles II was invited to Scotland to be crowned king on the basis of the Covenants, and took the coronation oath at Scone, January 1, 1651, solemnly swearing to uphold the Covenants and the Westminster Standards. Meanwhile, Cromwell had invaded Scotland; and, in order to secure the unity of the Scottish nation in the face of invasion, certain Public Resolutions were proposed by Parliament to repeal the Act of Classes. The passing of these Resolutions by the General Assembly of 1651 brought a serious division in the ranks of the Covenanters, dividing them into two parties: the Resolutioners, and the Protesters who called for repentance, not resolutions, in the face of the national danger. In 1652 and 1653 there were two General Assemblies, one Resolutioner and the other Protester. However, after 1653 both Assemblies were suppressed by 'that conquering usurper Oliver Cromwell.'<sup>14</sup>

With the Restoration of 1660, Charles II repudiated the Covenants which he had sworn to uphold ten years before. The Act Recissory of 1661 rescinded all the legal enactments of the Second Reformation. In 1662 Prelacy was legally restored, the Abjuration Act declared the Covenants to have been unlawful oaths, and the Great Ejection of those ministers faithful to the Covenants took place. Throughout the Restoration period the Erastian principle, that the church is but a department of the state, prevailed. Every person holding public office, including ministers, had to swear that 'the King's majesty is the only supreme government of this realm, over all persons, and in all causes, ecclesiastical as well as civil.'<sup>15</sup>

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14. Vos, 49 ff. The oath taken by Charles II is quoted on 53 f. The designation of Cromwell (quoted on 61) is taken from the *Act, Declaration, and Testimony For the Whole of Our Covenanted Reformation, etc.*, 1761; 3rd ed., 1782, 23. This is the original judicial testimony of the Reformed Presbytery of Scotland. For an account of the Covenanters under Cromwell, see Douglas, 'Developments Under the Commonwealth,' 61-78.

15. *Ibid.*, 66 ff., (cf. Johnston, 121 ff.). The words quoted are from the Test Act of 1681, but the basic principle is involved in the Oath of Allegiance of 1661. For the text of the oath required by the Test Act, see Douglas, 209 f.

The Restoration drove the faithful Covenanters to hold divine services in private homes and open fields. The government responded to these 'conventicles' with legal prohibition and persecution on the one hand and Indulgences on the other. The latter were royal offers to allow some of the ejected ministers to resume their official ministry conditional upon compliance with certain regulations of an Erastian character calculated to deprive them of their spiritual independence. The first of seven Indulgences was offered in 1669 and drove a wedge among the Covenanters, again dividing them into two parties: the Indulged, who favored the acceptance of the Indulgences; and the Non-Indulged, who would have nothing to do with them.<sup>16</sup>

From 1669 on, many Covenanter ministers preached against the Indulgences, but about 1677 a few of the stricter ones began to preach separation from the Indulged. 'Come out from among them, and be ye separate' (I Cor. 6:17 f.) was the cry. Moreover, in the face of bitter and senseless persecution certain of the more zealous Covenanters took to arms in self-defense, incurring the wrath of their persecutors. The chief event which triggered armed conflict was the assassination of one of the chief persecutors, Archbishop James Sharp, by some overzealous Covenanters in 1679. The government responded by branding all field conventicles 'rendezvouses of rebellion,' and all who attended them were considered guilty of treason. This act of the government evoked a public protest on the part of the strict Covenanters, the Rutherglen Testimony of 1679. This document, entitled *The Declaration and Testimony of Some of the True Presbyterian Party in Scotland*, is a severe condemnation of the Restoration and the laws maintaining it.

It was at this time that the more zealous Covenanters again divided into two parties over their attitude toward allegiance to Charles II. The majority persisted in their loyalty to the

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16. *Ibid.*, 79 ff.; cf. Johnston, 125 ff.

King's person and authority, as indicated in the Glasgow Declaration (1679). As persecution became more violent, these ceased to be vocal in their protest. The minority, on the other hand, maintained that Charles II, by repudiating the Covenants, had repudiated his right to the throne, and ought to be deposed. These were the strict Covenanters under the leadership of Donald Cargill and Richard Cameron.<sup>17</sup>

Cargill is the principal author of the Queensferry Paper which was found by the authorities on the body of a martyred Covenanter minister, June 4, 1680. It is a most remarkable document: God has raised up the faithful Covenanters, not only to rid the land of Popery, Prelacy, and Erastianism, but also to remove those who by transgression have forfeited their authority. Chief among these is the House of Stuart, who, not content with introducing Popery and Prelacy into the church, have introduced 'tyranny and arbitrary government' into the state. On the one hand, they have not prosecuted the enemies of God—atheists, blasphemers, swearers, adulterers, and so forth, but on the other, they have butchered His friends in a display of rapine, tumult, and blood—which can no longer be called a government, but a 'lustful rage.' Consequently, the Lord has declared that 'He will have war with them for ever, and has commanded His people utterly to root them out.'

We do declare that we shall set up over ourselves, and over what God shall give us power of, government and governors according to the Word of God. . . . We shall no more commit the government of ourselves, and the making of laws for us, to any one single person, or lineal successor, . . . this kind of government by a single person being most liable to inconveniences, and aptest to degenerate into tyranny, as sad and long experience has taught us.

There is also a ringing defense of the Covenanters' 'separation' from the Church and its indulged ministry:

Separation, as the Scriptures and divines take it in an evil sense, cannot be attributed to us; for if there be a separation it must be where

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17. *Ibid.*, 88-98; cf. Johnston, 132-134.

the change is, and that is not in us; we are not separating from the communion of the Church, and setting up new ordinances and a new ministry, but cleaving to the same ministers, and following the same ordinances, when others have slidden back to new ways, and have a new authority superadded.<sup>18</sup>

On the night of June 22, 1680, Richard Cameron, with nineteen other armed horsemen, rode into the little town of Sanquhar and read into the breathless silence of the townspeople another document which publicly declared war with Charles Stuart. The sin of acknowledging him as king could be tolerated no longer. If the Queensferry Paper was the first formal manifesto of the Reformed Presbyterian movement, the Sanquhar Declaration was its first public proclamation. For although the anti-monarchical position of Cargill and Cameron was not based upon new principles, it was something new in Scottish church history. In the words of Matthew Hutchison: 'That which gave to this Declaration its specialty, was the deliberate act of severing themselves from all subjection to the existing Government. In order to give consistency and force to their protest, they disowned the king, and elected to live outside the State as then constituted and governed, as they were already outside the Church which the State had established. In Richard Cameron and his associates we see the founders of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, and the Sanquhar Declaration was the first public pronouncement of its separate position.'<sup>19</sup>

For their stand Cameron and Cargill paid with their lives.

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18. Johnston, 134 ff. The document closes: 'We bind and oblige ourselves to defend ourselves and one another in our worshipping of God, and in our natural, civil, and Divine rights and liberties, till we shall overcome, or send them down under debate to the posterity that they may begin where we end.' The Queensferry Paper appeals to the rule of law, enacted by the representatives of the people, as opposed to the rule of arbitrary government. As such it is reminiscent of Covenantanter Samuel Rutherford's famous treatise (1644) *Lex Rex* (Law is King), although it is doubtful whether Rutherford would have endorsed all of the Queensferry Paper. See Douglas, 50 ff.

19. M. Hutchison, *The Reformed Presbyterian Church in Scotland—Its Origin and History 1680-1876*, 1893, 46 f. This is the classic work on the origins and history of the RPC in Scotland.

The former was killed in a skirmish a few days after Sanguhar, and the latter was captured about a year later in July of 1681 and quickly executed. He ascended the scaffold with the words, ‘The Lord knows I go on this ladder with less fear and perturbation of mind, than ever I entered the pulpit to preach.’<sup>20</sup> The martyrdom of Cameron and Cargill inaugurated what is known in the annals of Covenanter history as the Killing Times. The intensified and vicious persecution of the 1680’s overshadowed all that had gone before. Its heart-rending stories and unbelievable atrocities are told in the works of Patrick Walker and John Howie.<sup>21</sup> They are also told in the inscriptions on the tombstones:

HERE LYS THOMAS McHAFFIE, MARTYR 1686.  
 THO I WAS SICK AND LIKE TO DIE  
 YET BLOODY BRUCE DID MURDER ME,  
 BECAUSE I ADHERED IN MY STATION  
 TO OUR COVENANTED REFORMATION.  
 MY BLOOD FOR VENGEANCE YET DOTHS CALL  
 UPON ZION’S HATERS ALL.<sup>22</sup>

During the Killing Times, when they could no longer meet in field conventicles, the Cameronian, or testifying, Covenanters, organized private devotional meetings which met in secret. These came to be known as Praying Societies or Society Meetings, and those who attended them as Society People. In 1681 these societies were organized into a general correspondence, to meet four times yearly, and thus came to be known as the United Societies. As might be expected, the Society People were closely knit and had strict requirements for membership. For instance, no one could be a member of

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20. J. Howie, *The Scots Worthies*, 1853, 524. This is a series of short biographies of the martyrs of the Covenant. Cf. A. Smellie, *Men of the Covenant*, 1924.

21. P. Walker, *Six Saints of the Covenant* (2 vols.), 1901. Howie estimates that during the twenty-eight years of persecution (1660-1688), over 18,000 people suffered death or extreme hardship (see Vos, 124).

22. J. Gibson, *Inscriptions on the Tombstones and Monuments Erected in Memory of the Covenanters*, n.d., 197 (cf. 28, 70, 90, 106 f., 169, 209). For a brief presentation of Covenanter sufferings, see Douglas, 148 f., 153 ff.

a Society Meeting who had anything to do with the established government or church—or recognized the ministry of ‘the indulged or silent Presbyterians.’

The testimony of the Society People was warmly evangelical and not entirely negative. However, from the nature of their circumstances, the burden of their testimony was a negative one. When accused of schism, their hounded leader James Renwick published *An Informatory Vindication of a Poor, Wasted, Misrepresented Remnant of the Suffering, Anti-Popish, Anti-Prelatic, Anti-Erastian, Anti-Sectarian, True Presbyterian Church of Christ in Scotland* (1686). Renwick was the last ordained Covenanter martyr, ascending the scaffold at the age of 26 in early 1688.<sup>23</sup>

With the Revolution Settlement of 1688-1690 the Reformed Presbyterian conscience was shaken to its foundations. The United Societies welcomed the deposition of the Stuarts and cessation of persecution, but in the end they refused to be included in the settlement realized in both church and state. In 1689 they were led in renovating the Covenant by Alexander Shields and the other two ministers still faithfully serving them.<sup>24</sup> Subsequently these three ministers were directed to read a paper representing their position before the General Assembly of 1690. The paper was ignored by the General Assembly, and Shields and his two ministerial associates forsook the United Societies to be received into the re-established Church of Scotland.<sup>25</sup>

The reasons for rejecting the Revolution Settlement by the Cameronian conscience are briefly as follows: First, the settlement was not faithful to the Covenants in that the au-

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23. Douglas, 145, 172 f.; Vos, 125 f.

24. Johnston, 163.

25. Hutchison, 100 ff. Hutchison is the best source for the history of the United Societies following the Revolution of 1688. He says that the paper read by Shields, entitled *The Complaint and Humble Petition of Many Presbyterian People Living in Certain Shires of Scotland*, is ‘pervaded by a pathetic and almost hopeless sadness . . . the cry of earnest Christian men who deeply feel the isolated position to which they have been driven, and are full of longing for fellowship with brethren in the gospel’ (103).

thorities of church and state were not bound by them. Indeed, the Covenants were positively violated as, for instance, in the scorning of the Solemn League's notion of a covenanted uniformity in the religion of England, Ireland, and Scotland. Second, Presbyterianism was not re-established in the Church of Scotland on the authority of the Word of God, but on the basis of political expediency. Moreover, the settlement was Erastian in method and effect. The effect of the settlement was to make the king, not Christ, head of the Church, with authority to interfere with her God-given right of free assembly and deliberation. Finally, true Christian civil government was not established. It was more Christian than the tyranny of the Stuarts, but it did not provide for the legal re-establishment of the Second Reformation.<sup>26</sup>

In summary, the Covenanter attitude to the Revolution is well expressed in these words of Scottish Reformed Presbyterians of a later date: 'The settlement formed at the time was greatly defective, and the constitution adopted, both in church and state, when weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, was found wanting. There was a turning but not unto the way of duty, a revolution but no scriptural reformation, and the glory of this second temple came vastly short of what had been the church's attainments in former and better times.'<sup>27</sup>

Since the private and unpresbyterian ordination of ministers was in violation of the Cameronian conscience,<sup>28</sup> the Society People were without a minister from 1690 until the Rev. John McMillan joined them from the Established Church

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26. These are summarized in Vos. 141 ff.

27. *Summary of the History, Principles, and Testimony of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland*, 1821, 43 (Narrative). Cf. 34: 'Although the sword of persecution was sheathed, yet the reformation attainments of former times were greatly neglected.'

28. Cf. the Queensferry Paper (Johnston, 140): 'We do declare and acknowledge, that a Gospel ministry is a standing ordinance of God, appointed by Christ to continue in the Church until the end of the world; and that none of us shall take upon him the preaching of the Word, or administering, of the sacraments, unless called and ordained thereto by the ministers of the Gospel.'

of Scotland in 1706. Having become convinced of the validity of Cameronian principles, McMillan was received into their fellowship as pastor at large, heartily approving of, assenting to, and complying with 'all the Testimonies that have been carried on with respect to the Covenanted Reformation, and that in the by-past and present times by the honest godly and faithful Remnant against both Church and State, as they were and are agreeable to the Word of God and the Covenanted work of Reformation.'<sup>29</sup> At the time McMillan acceded to the United Societies, they were about 20 in number, amounting to a total membership of some 7,000.<sup>30</sup> In 1712 they renewed the Solemn League and Covenant, article by article, with uplifted hands to testify against the ensnaring Union with England and the latitudinarian Act of Toleration.

The Society People were without regular ecclesiastical organization until the Reformed Presbytery was constituted in 1743 by McMillan and the Rev. Thomas Nairn, who acceded to the United Societies from the Associate Presbytery founded by the Seceders of 1733.<sup>31</sup> The designation *Reformed* was adopted, not to profess superiority or perfection, but for the purpose of professing faithfulness to the whole of the Reformation attainments of the past in both church and state. Thus the Society People looked upon themselves as distinctly *Reformed* Presbyterians to distinguish themselves

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29. Hutchison, 151.

30. Vos, 159.

31. Hutchison, 187. 'This event marked a stage in advance of anything contemplated at the organization of the United Societies in 1681. The original purpose was, to stand apart for the time from the corrupt part of the Church from which they still claimed to form a constituent portion, and to wait till in the providence of God, the way should be opened up by the removal of corruption, for a coalescing of the partially-sundered sections. They did not dream of forming a separate and independent Church in the land,—that would have seemed to them destructive of the unity of the Church and liable to the charge of schism.' Hutchison goes on to say that the explanation of this change of attitude is 1) the prolonged separation from the Established Church, and 2) the formation of another ecclesiastical body by the Secession of 1733; and that the Society People had come to feel that they simply could not give the effective testimony which their King desired unless they 'take up a more decided position of separation, and stand before the world as a regularly constituted ecclesiastical body' (187 f).

from those Presbyterians who were unfaithful to the Second Reformation.<sup>32</sup>

It should be noted at this point that the Reformed Presbytery was not simply interested in the testimony in Scotland. In 1744 Nairn was sent to minister to the Society People in Ireland, and in 1751 the Rev. John Cuthbertson was sent to those in America. These events introduce us to the establishment of Reformed Presbyterianism in America.<sup>33</sup>

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32. *Old Presbyterian Dissenters*, 8. This at any rate was the official explanation adopted by the Scottish RP Presbytery in 1806 (p. 10 in 1806 ed.): ‘Not that they consider themselves as any better men, or as having, in their own persons, arrived at higher degrees of perfection: Such thoughts they never entertained; but purely for this reason, that it is at least their honest intention, faithfully to adhere to the whole of our reformation attainments, in both church and state, without knowingly dropping any part of these. On this account, it is presumed, they may justly enough be called the REFORMED, or REFORMATION-PRESBYTERY; while, in another point of view, they might, with equal propriety, be denominated, the DISSENTING PRESBYTERY.’ On the matter of the name, see D. M. Carson, ‘The Reformed Presbyterian Church in America,’ in Slosser (ed.), *op. cit.*, (102-126), 104 f. This article is a concise introduction to the RPC in America from the Old Light RP standpoint. See also H. H. Meiners, *A Brief History of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America, General Synod* (Mimeographed paper presented at the Uniting Service of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church and the Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America, General Synod, April 6, 1965). Meiners says: ‘They were first called Reformed Presbyterians about 1701, Reformed for their theology and Presbyterian for their form of government.’ However this explanation, found in various sources, seems to be wanting. In the first place, it is not the official explanation of the Scottish RPC, and, second, if this is all the name meant in 1701, it would not have distinguished the RP’s from the Church of Scotland, which was certainly Reformed in theology and Presbyterian in government. In the light of the historical circumstances, the official explanation alone makes sense.

33. For a concise account of the RPC in Ireland (up to 1876), see Hutchison, 397-403. For the story up to 1912, see the *Testimony of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland* (2 vols.), 1912. Certain brethren separated from the Irish Synod in 1840 to form the Eastern Irish Synod. The story of the Scottish RPC up to 1876 is found in Hutchison, 188 ff. (cf. Vos, 162 ff). For the story up to 1932, see the *Testimony of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland*, 1932. For an annotated bibliography of Scottish RPC literature, see Johnston, 451-465. The Scottish Presbytery divided in 1753, only ten years after it was organized, over the extent of the atonement. Those adhering to universal redemption formed the Reformed Presbytery of Edinburgh, which dissolved soon after 1817. The Scottish Synod divided in 1863 over the question of participation in elections, the larger body uniting with the Free Church in 1876. When one considers the Disruptions of 1753 and 1863, together with the Disruption of 1833 in the American RPC—let alone the Secession of 1733 and the Great Disruption of 1843 from the Established Church—along with the Solemn League and

### **Reformed Presbyterianism In America**

Throughout the religious persecutions of the seventeenth century, few Scots emigrated to America. Unwelcome in English projects of colonization, they came slowly to the new world.<sup>34</sup> Most of those who did leave Scotland emigrated to the North of Ireland, among whom there were a few Cameronians who adhered to the Covenanted Reformation. Many of these in turn left Ireland for the new world. In fact, D. C. Carson maintains that 'it was almost entirely from these Ulster Cameronians that the church in America developed.' They came, for both religious and economic reasons, in the first great wave of Scotch-Irish immigration from 1720 to 1745. At first, the Society People settled for the most part in eastern Pennsylvania, but later 'they were thinly scattered from Nova Scotia to South Carolina, and far into the interior.'<sup>35</sup> At an early stage they were centered in four areas: the Susquehanna Valley in Pennsylvania, Chester County in South Carolina, the Hudson and Mohawk Valleys in New York, and the Connecticut Valley in Vermont. The Covenanters were zealous to take advantage of the frontier. As one of their members put it in 1773, 'This is the best poor man's country in the world.' With regard to numbers, it is estimated that there were never more than 10,000 Covenanters in America during the whole of the eighteenth century.<sup>36</sup>

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Covenant in 1643, the last Covenanted General Assembly in 1653, the constitution of the Reformed Presbytery in 1743, and the first public renewal of the Covenants in America in the same year—the number '3' seems to be a very significant number in Reformed Presbyterian history!!

34. N.E. Clark, *A History of the Reformed Presbyterian Church* (Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Butler University), 1966, 18. This thesis is a helpful introductory tool in researching RP history, especially that of the General Synod. Miss Clark is now Mrs. J. Wyatt George and co-author of B. C. and J. W. George, *op. cit.*

35. J.C. M'Feeters, *The Covenanters in America: Their Voice and Testimony on Present Moral Issues*, 1892, 58. M'Feeters is primarily a propagandist for the Old Light Covenanters.

36. D.C. Carson, *History of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in America to 1871* (Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Pennsylvania), 1964, 14-20.

As the Covenanters came to America, they organized themselves into Praying Societies with periodic General Meetings of a representative nature. They were, at first and often, without ordained ministers or elders and thus without formal preaching and the administration of the sacraments. Yet they were orderly, closely-knit groups—their leaders dealing with problems of doctrine, membership, discipline, and finances as they arose. Carson remarks concerning the Society Meetings: ‘Obviously the institution, developed for a very different purpose in Scotland, was of the greatest utility in meeting the particular problems of the frontier.’<sup>37</sup> The Society People practiced separation to the point that even attending weddings performed by Covenant-breaking magistrates or ministers was condemned.<sup>38</sup> As their followers later wrote:

They kept themselves distinct from the other worshipping societies, which they found formed or forming in the land in which they were come to sojourn, as judging them no way disposed to enter into the full spirit of the covenanted reformation. They considered themselves under obligations to walk by the rule of their former attainments, and even essayed to renew their covenant with God in a public, social manner.<sup>39</sup>

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Unfortunately unpublished, Carson’s work is a very helpful recent treatment of early RP history in America, emphasizing the tension between church and society (cf. 77 ff, 93 ff, 252). The author is of the Old Lights and follows their distinctive history after the Disruption of 1833. On the matter of the origins of the RPC in America, see Hutchison, 403. Cf. the small pamphlet by H. Finley, *The Covenanter and the Frontier*, 1937.

37. Slosser (ed.), *op. cit.*, 117.

38. Carson, *History*, 21 f. For a sample of the Minutes of a General Meeting (1744), see W. M. Glasgow, *History of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in America*, 1888, 246 ff. For rules of order for congregational meetings, see 264 ff. Glasgow is the most important sourcebook on the history of the RPC in America up to 1888, containing many important documents and dealing with many aspects of the Church’s life. For instance, there are historical sketches of all the RP congregations and biographical sketches of all of the RP ministers. The author writes as a strong Old Light Covenanter and a strong exponent of what he calls ‘Covenanterism.’

39. *Reformation Principles Exhibited by the Reformed Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (RPE)*, 1892, 113. This is the official testimony of the Church which will be referred to in detail later. It was first published by the Reformed Presbytery in 1807 and passed through many editions. The pagination, unless otherwise noted, is from the 1892 edition authorized by the General Synod (New Light).

This renewal of the Covenant took place with drawn swords<sup>40</sup> under the leadership of Alexander Craighead on November 11, 1743, at Middle Octorara, southern Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. Craighead was not reared a Covenanter, and had originally been ordained in the mainline Presbyterian Church. He had, however, come into conflict with the courts of the Church on two counts. First, he was a friend of George Whitefield and an ardent revivalist of the New Side who had been censured for preaching within the jurisdiction of another Presbytery. Second, he ran into difficulty with the New Side Presbytery of New Castle because he agreed with the Old Side on the necessity of strict subscription to the Confession of Faith, complaining that, on the basis of loose subscription, ‘the Synod or Presbytery is made Judge, what our Confession is to be.’ In this quandary Craighead joined the Society People sometime late in 1742, promising to uphold the National Covenant and the Solemn League and Covenant.<sup>41</sup>

The very fact that the American Covenanters renewed the Covenants in America indicates that they embraced the principle of the descending obligation of the Covenants made in Scotland upon their descendants overseas. They were, as has been remarked, ‘planting the Reformation vine in American soil.’<sup>42</sup> Their testimony at Middle Octorara was both positive and negative: they were pledging to strive both to establish the Covenanted Reformation in America, and to testify against all its enemies. However, the dominant thrust of the

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40. For attempted explanations as to why the swords, see M. W. Armstrong, L. A. Loetscher, C. A. Anderson, *The Presbyterian Enterprise: Sources of American Presbyterian History*, 1956, 59 f. This is a handy and valuable sourcebook which, however, reflects a strong editorial bias and concentrates almost entirely upon the history of the U.S.A. Presbyterian Church.

41. Carson, *History*, 24 ff. Cf. A. Creaghead, *The Reasons of Mr. Alexander Creaghead’s Receding from the Present Judicatures of this Church*, 1743. This pamphlet was originally published by Benjamin Franklin! There is some discrepancy as to the spelling of the author’s name. For the Old Side-New Side controversy in the mainline Presbyterian Church, see [Chapter IV](#).

42. M’Feeters, *op. cit.*, 59 f.

Covenanter declaration was negative, as indicated by Craighead's account of the occasion.<sup>43</sup>

Although the year 1743 was the 100th anniversary of the Solemn League and Covenant, Craighead does not mention this. After a somewhat lengthy personal preface, there follows the three oath-attested documents. There is first 'A Solemn Acknowledgement of publick Sins, and Breaches of the National Covenant and the Solemn League and Covenant.' Next there is 'A Solemn Engagement to Duties contained in our National and Solemn League and Covenant.' These duties are: 1) Witness against all encroachments upon the royal prerogatives of Jesus Christ. 2) Separation from the corrupt constitutions of church and state.<sup>44</sup> 3) Opposition to Independency, Libertinism, Anabaptism, Antinomianism, Arminianism, Socinianism, Quakerism, Erastianism, Deism, Moravianism, Perfectionism [*i.e.*, 'that awful Error of pretending to live without Sin, and yet being notoriously wicked'], and an 'abominable Catholicism or mongrel church communion' [*i.e.*, allowing members of other churches to join in a local congregation's observance of holy communion]. 4) Maintenance of not only the form of true religion, but the power. 5) Maintenance of Presbyterian church government. 6) Maintenance of *the whole* of 'the true Reformed Presbyterian religion.' Finally, there is 'A Declaration, Protestation, and Testimony of a suffering Remnant of the Anti-Popish, Anti-Lutheran, Anti-Prelatick, Anti-Erastianism, Anti-Latitudinarian, Anti-Sectarian, true Presbyterian Church of Christ *in America*.' This testimony involves condemnations of Charles I, Cromwell, Charles II, the Duke of York (James II), and the Revolution Settlement. The

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43. A. Craighead, *A Revival of the Covenants, National and Solemn League . . . as They Were Carried On at Middle Octorara in Pennsylvania, November 11, 1743* (2nd ed.), 1748 (reprinted with an introduction by W. M. Glasgow, June 1, 1895).

44. *Ibid.*, 29: 'We look upon it as our Duty to separate ourselves from the corrupt Constitutions of both Church and State, and not to touch, taste, nor handle these Abominations, lest by partaking with them in their Sins, we be made Partakers with them in their Plagues.'

ceremony ended with the familiar words: 'Let King JESUS reign, and let all his Enemies be scattered. Amen.'<sup>45</sup>

Such was the Covenanter conception of the descending obligation of the Covenants. As Carson remarks: 'These documents might almost have been written in Scotland. . . . The assumption of Craighead and his associates was that they were still transplanted Scotsmen, that crossing the ocean did not affect their responsibilities, and that the covenants bound them in the same way as they bound their brethren in Scotland and Ireland.'<sup>46</sup>

Since Craighead could not himself constitute a presbytery, he asked ministerial assistance from the recently constituted Reformed Presbytery in Scotland, and when such was not immediately forthcoming, he became discouraged, and took up his former ecclesiastical connections.<sup>47</sup>

The Reformed Presbytery of Scotland did, however, send in 1751 the Rev. John Cuthbertson, who ministered in America for 40 years until his death in 1791. On Cuthbertson's first Sabbath in America he lectured on the passage in Luke (6:22-31) which begins, 'Take no thought for your life,' and ends, 'But rather seek ye the kingdom of God.' The words symbolized a ministry full of faith, labor, and sacrifice. Cuthbertson made his headquarters at Middle Octorara from which he served the Societies scattered throughout the Colonies. His travels and ministry are recorded in the diary which includes entries in both English and Latin. Perhaps the most familiar entries in the diary are: '*Fessus, fessus valde*—tired, very

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45. *Ibid.*, 27 ff. 'Perfectionism' in point 3 is not Craighead's word, but the author's; the obvious reference is to the teaching of John Wesley. Cf. Carson, *History*, 28 ff.

46. Carson, *History*, 32. Cf. C. A. Briggs, *American Presbyterianism*, 1885, 243 ff., for an account of Craighead from the mainline Presbyterian point of view.

47. *RPE* says of Craighead: 'He did not, however, possess stability. Overstrained zeal is seldom permanent. This man, after having cooperated with the covenanters, with an ardor which appeared to some of them enthusiastic, left his profession and vows, and turned to the flocks of his former companions' (114). *RPE* (115) gives the impression that he left in 1744 whereas Briggs (*op. cit.*, 275) says he did not leave until 1751.

tired,' and 'Give all praise to my gracious God.' Such an attitude of praise was necessary when, for instance, he wrote, after staying overnight with a parishioner: 'Slept none. Bugs.' Cuthbertson did much to make the organization of the scattered Societies more formal by ordaining elders and establishing sessions. He was a hard worker, preaching as many as eleven times in one week and never using the same sermon twice. Every Sabbath he would explain a Psalm, give a detailed lecture on a passage of Scripture, and preach a more popular sermon on the great themes of the Gospel. Communion was held once a year among the Societies, and strict discipline was observed with regard to who was allowed to partake.<sup>48</sup>

Cuthbertson sent repeated calls to Scotland for help, but it was not until 1773 that he was joined by Matthew Lind and Alexander Dobbin. On March 9, 1774, these three constituted the first Reformed Presbytery in America. The entry in the frontier preacher's diary simply reads: 'After more consultation and prayer, Presbytery.'<sup>49</sup> However, the first Reformed Presbytery was only destined to last eight years until 1782. In the meantime, the American Revolution! The Covenanters in America had no more use for George III than their ancestors for Charles II. As Glasgow remarks: 'To a man the Covenanters were Whigs. An unsound Whig made a poor Covenanter, and a good Covenanter made a loyal Whig.' On

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48. Carson, *History*, 34 ff. Cf. Slosser (ed.), *op. cit.*, 109 f. Cf. also W. L. Fisk, 'The Diary of John Cuthbertson, Missionary to the Covenanters of Colonial Pennsylvania,' *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, LXIII (Oct., 1949), 441-458. The manuscript of the diary is in the possession of Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. On Cuthbertson see also J. M. Adair and A. S. Aiken, *A Biographical Sketch of the Rev. John Cuthbertson, the First Reformed Presbyterian Minister in America*, 1878.

49. *Ibid.*, 49. Cf. Meiners, *op. cit.*: 'It is interesting to discover that in this same year [1774] William McGuffey and his family emigrated from Wigtown, Scotland and arrived in Philadelphia in August. . . . William McGuffey was a Reformed Presbyterian of sturdy stock.... It was his grandsons, William Homes McGuffey and Alexander Hamilton McGuffey, who were the authors of the famous *McGuffey Readers* that were used for seventy-five years or more all over America.'

July 2, 1777, Cuthbertson led some of his followers in taking an oath of fidelity to the cause of the Colonies.<sup>50</sup> In 1782 the three ministers of the Reformed Presbytery, under Cuthbertson's leadership, joined with the Associate Presbytery to form the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church. Most of the Society People followed their leadership. As a strict Covenanter later remarked: 'The great majority of the Covenanters in the North followed their misguided pastor into the union.'<sup>51</sup>

What is the explanation of this union? The position of the Covenanters in Scotland was that Christians should refuse 'all voluntary subjection for conscience sake' to the British Crown in protest against a Covenant-breaking government's right to rule; whereas the Scottish Seceders had maintained that the Christian ought to acknowledge the civil authority of the Crown 'in lawful commands.' The Associate Presbytery in America had accordingly opposed the Reformed Presbytery's position on the American Revolution. However, now that the Colonies were no longer under the British Crown, the opinions of the American Covenanters and Seceders on the new civil government were in a state of flux, and could be more easily coalesced—especially in a time when the spirit of confederation was in the air.<sup>52</sup>

Another apparent explanation is that the principle of the descending obligation of the Covenants seems to have come into question among some of the early American Covenanters. This began to occur as early as 1760 according to Findley, an ex-Covenanter who found his way into the Associate Reformed Church. He further maintains that the Reformed

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50. Glasgow, 65-68. For a discussion of the relationship between the Declaration of Independence (1776), the Mecklenburg Declaration (1775, under the leadership of Craighead in N. C.) and the Queensferry Paper (1680), see *loc. cit.*

51. *Ibid.*, 74.

52. Carson, *History*, 50 (cf. Vos, 149). Cf. *Act, Declaration, and Testimony*, etc., 1777, 200 f. (cf. 169); also, *Answer by the Associate Presbytery to Reasons of Dissent, Given. . . by the Reverend Mr. Thomas Nairne*, 1751, 55. Cf. Clark, *History*, 32; George, *op. cit.*, 27.

Presbytery agreed in 1774 or 1775 that ‘while the presbytery still continued to hold the covenants, testimonies, and sufferings of Scotland . . . in respectful remembrance,’ the only terms of communion insisted on by presbytery would be allegiance to the Scriptures and the doctrines of the Westminster Standards as agreeable to the Scriptures. Cuthbertson himself is purported to have taught the *personal* rather than the *national* obligation to the Covenants.<sup>53</sup>

There were, however, several individuals and Societies who refused to enter into the Union of 1782. These were scattered through the several states like sheep without a shepherd, choosing not to abandon their Covenanted testimony. ‘They disapproved of the union, and considered their former ministers as guilty of apostasy.’<sup>54</sup> The Reformed Presbytery in Scotland also disapproved of the union, but for some reason their missionaries to America after 1782 did not take a strong enough stand against it, and were unacceptable to the Society People. It was not until the arrival of the Rev. James McKinney that they found a champion. McKinney’s attitude toward the former Reformed Presbytery of America is expressed in simple terms: ‘Her transatlantic sons soon wearied of the cross. The late revolution seems to have afforded a desirable pretext for casting it away.’<sup>55</sup>

In 1795 McKinney published his opinions on the new federal Constitution. His attack has a twofold thrust. In the first place the Constitution is of an entirely secular nature drawn up by ungodly men without regard to God’s law. Unlike the Declaration of Independence it does not even make any mention of God. Secondly, it is calculated to protect all manner of heresy and immorality in the name of religious toleration. McKinney would have concurred with the terse

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53. *Ibid.*, 48 ff. W. Findley, *Observations on The Two Sons of Oil*, 1912, 307, 312 f.

54. *RPE*, 129; *cf.* 130: ‘The Church was in danger of becoming entirely extinct, in America.’ For the attitude of later Covenanters toward the Seceders and the union, see *RPE*, 119 ff. and Glasgow, 69 ff.

55. Carson, *History*, 58.

statement of a later Covenanter: 'The Declaration of Independence was right, but the Constitution of the United States was wrong.'<sup>56</sup>

Carson, the most recent historian of the movement, observes that McKinney's leadership at this point was very significant for the history of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in America. 'Under McKinney, therefore, a remnant of the church maintained its position of dissent from the government, but shifted the basis of that dissent from the Solemn League and Covenant and the Revolution Settlement to the secular nature of the new American constitution. This marked a new intellectual beginning for the church and was the answer to the question of the relationship of the Scottish church to the United States that satisfied the remnant society people.'<sup>57</sup>

In 1797 McKinney was joined by his brother-in-law from Ireland, the Rev. William Gibson; and at Philadelphia on February 21, 1798, the two ministers constituted the Reformed Presbytery in the United States of North America. It was McKinney's conviction that it would be more advantageous to the Reformation in the United States for the Church's affairs to be conducted by a judicatory in America, rather than by a committee in Scotland.<sup>58</sup>

In 1802 the Presbytery 'anxious to display a Judicial Testimony for truth and against error,' made further preparations to produce the same.<sup>59</sup> It is to this distinctive testi-

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56. Glasgow, 69.

57. Carson, *History*, 59. Cf. J. McKinney, *An Act. . . for a Day of Public Fasting* (1795), Reprinted in the *Reformed Presbyterian and Covenanter*, II (Jan., 1864), 10-15.

58. *Minutes of the Reformed Presbytery of America from 1798-1809*, 1 (1798). These minutes, though very succinct, are valuable sources and interesting reading. In 1802 the Presbytery, due to the wide expanse of its jurisdiction, divided into three regional committees: Northern (New York and Vermont), Middle (Pennsylvania and Maryland), and Southern (Carolina). Cf. *RPE*, 135 ff.

59. *Ibid.*, 8 (1802). From this entry we learn that the matter first came under official consideration in 1801, but this is the first reference recorded in the *Minutes*.

mony, finally published in 1807 under the title *Reformation Principles Exhibited*, that we turn.

### **Reformation Principles Exhibited**

It is significant that the Reformed Presbytery in America felt that their peculiar circumstances in the United States demanded the publication of their distinctive testimony ‘with all speed.’ The preparation of *Reformation Principles Exhibited* was committed chiefly into the hands of Alexander McLeod. It was submitted to the brethren in Scotland and Ireland for their evaluation, worked over in Presbytery, and unanimously approved for publication.<sup>60</sup>

The Preface to *Reformation Principles Exhibited* begins with these exalted words:

The Gospel of Christ is a system of peace and benevolence. An exhibition of divine mercy to miserable man cannot justly be charged with a tendency to excite evil passions: it is calculated to soothe the heart, and to cherish meekness and love. They who live under the influence of true religion, exhibit a living proof that it does not impair the strength of the understanding, or spoil the temper of man. Christianity, as a subjective principle, is uniformly sober and lovely. Grace originating in Heaven, dispensed by the Blessed Spirit, and constituting a *bond of perfectness* by which men are united to one another and to God in an indissoluble union, is the grand characteristic of religion. In this there is nothing which deserves hostility from any part of the human family.

Nevertheless, there are always those who, in their refusal to submit to the Christian system, despise the Church. It is therefore necessary for the Church to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, not only to edify Christians, but also to convince others to embrace the faith. The testimony of the saints should, therefore, be calculated to preserve the distinction between the world and the Church, to enlighten those who sit in darkness, and to establish those

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60. *Ibid.*, 24 (1804), 36 (1806). The 1806 *Minutes* read: ‘After prayer the Moderator put the question, Approve or disapprove? When the members answered unanimously, Approve. And the Court do hereby approve and ratify this Testimony as their act and deed. Afterwards a member was called to give thanks to God for the harmony and unanimity which prevailed throughout the whole consideration and ratification.’

who have already embraced the faith.’ The purpose of the Testimony is not to provoke controversy, but to excite candid discussion of the truth, since ‘it is not the true interest of any man to embrace a false religion.’<sup>61</sup>

The original plan of the Testimony is threefold. There is first the *historical* part, which exhibits the Church as a visible society in covenant with God through the various ages of time; second, the *declaratory* part, which as the Standing Testimony, or Testimony proper, exhibits the truths which the Church accepts and the errors which she rejects; and third, the *argumentative* part, which is to consist in a particular application of the Standing Testimony to the various ecclesiastical systems known in the United States. However, only the declaratory part is to be an article of faith; for although authentic history and sound argument are human helps to faith, divine truth alone is its foundation. As it turned out, only the historical and declarative parts of the Testimony were ever presented to the public.<sup>62</sup>

It is significant that the Presbytery felt the duty of introducing their Standing Testimony with a history. It is an indication of their profound sense of history. The purpose of the *Brief Historical View* is, first, to testify to God’s goodness toward his Covenant people and to the faithful contendings of the saints; and then, to provide a means of instruction for those desirous to understand the Church’s Fixed Testimony.<sup>63</sup> The *Historical View* exhibits not only the deep historical sense of the Covenanters, but is interesting as an example of their conception of church history. The work is divided into Book I on the Church Universal, from the Fall of Man to the Reformation; and Book II on the Reformed Presbyterian Church, from the Second Reformation to the publication of *Reformation Principles Exhibited*.

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61. *RPE*, 5 f.

62. *RPE*, 6-8. Though much labor was put into it, the argumentative part was never completed and presented to the world.

63. *Minutes* (1798-1809), 33 (1806); cf. *RPE*, 3.

The Covenanter philosophy of history is imbued with the grandeur of the Church in her sojourn through history. ‘The Church is the centre around which the Creator causes all terrestrial things to revolve.’<sup>64</sup> Consequently, human history cannot be understood except in relationship to God’s purpose in glorifying himself through the salvation of his Church in history. This is God’s sovereign purpose in history, and since His purpose is unalterable, He will most certainly bring it to pass.<sup>65</sup>

The Church began with Adam and Eve in the Garden, looking to the mercy of God for their salvation from sin on the basis of the Covenant of Grace. However, the saints are not only interested in the Covenant of Grace, but in the Ecclesiastical Covenant whereby the Covenant of Grace is externally dispensed in the Church as a visible Covenant Society.

Mercy flows through a covenant system, and it is externally exhibited under a covenant. The visible Church, as a Society, is in covenant with God. The covenant between God and his Church consists in God’s proposing a certain form of religion as the external dispensation of his grace, and the Church professing to receive, and engaging to perform, in the strength of promised grace, every part of religious worship, agreeably to that very form which God has appointed.

The whole history of the Old Testament, indeed of all time, is simply the history of these divine impositions and man’s response to them in terms of apostasy on the one hand and faithfulness to the Covenant, including the periodic solemn renovation of it, on the other.<sup>66</sup>

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64. *RPE*, 15: ‘In proportion as objects exceed in grandeur, they demand the admiration of the human mind. And there is not among the ranks of created being one object worthy of comparison, in respect of sublimity, with the Christian Church. A moral empire, consisting of members animated by the Eternal Spirit, the mediatory person, God manifest in the flesh at its head, the vast machinery of creation moving in regular subordination to its interest, and exhibiting the ineffable glory of the Divinity, is an object to be contemplated with admiration and awe.’

65. *RPE*, 15 f., 17 f.

66. *RPE*, 19 f., 23-31. It should not be supposed that the Ecclesiastical Covenant and a national covenant are to be confused. ‘Ecclesiastical covenanting rests upon an immovable basis. *The Church is a Covenant Society*. A national

After the imposition of the New Covenant in the death of Christ, he arose from the dead and, upon granting a commission to the apostles as ecclesiastical officers, he ascended on high 'as an exalted Mediator, to administer the government of the whole empire of created existence, in subserviency to the interest of his peculiar kingdom and Church.' The New Covenant is the last and most perfect external dispensation of the Covenant of Grace, and is exhibited to all men under a Presbyterian constitution. In this connection the apostles had a twofold ministry: first, to persuade men to embrace Jesus Christ and repent of all their sins; and then, to organize these converts into a regular Church for the purpose of settling the ministry and ordinances among them, and this Church is to be, for all time, a Presbyterian Church.<sup>67</sup>

However, 'man is naturally corrupt, and grace is not hereditary.' The prophesied apostasy came, and in the year 606 the Roman Antichrist rose upon the scene. It was not until the eleventh century, however, that he managed to gain control of the national Churches of Europe. Nevertheless, there always were those who refused to bow to the papal authority—for instance, the Waldensians who were truly evangelical in creed and Presbyterian in government.<sup>68</sup>

Then came the Reformers who always made a distinction between the Papacy and the Catholic Church. They tried to reform the papal church, and upon failing, established various communions. In the shuffle the visible unity of Christ's Church was forgotten by all except Calvin and the Church in Geneva. Here church and state were not intermingled, but the state on its own maintained the visible unity of Christ's kingdom by enforcing religious uniformity upon the people. Also, it was in Geneva that the Scottish Reformation was born.<sup>69</sup>

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covenant is a very different thing. . . . *Nations are bound to honor Messiah; and upon this principle they covenant with God*' (71).

67. *RPE*, 38 ff.

68. *RPE*, 50 ff.

69. *RPE*, 62-71. There is an interesting explanation of the development of Reformation Erastianism (68 f.): 'The transition was natural and easy, although

The Second Reformation in Scotland was the pinnacle of Reformation achievement:

The Presbyterians in Scotland learned from their Bibles that the system of grace is the chief of God's works; that the saints are the salt of the earth, and Jesus is King of kings, and Lord of lords. Having organized the Church as the peculiar kingdom of the Redeemer, upon principles which maintained the exclusive headship of Christ, they demanded that the crown of the nation should be laid at the feet of Messiah. They required that the Church should not only be tolerated to establish her distinct ecclesiastical organization, but that she should hereafter be supported by the civil power of the nation in the enjoyment of her established rights.<sup>70</sup>

The Second Reformation, however, was short lived. 'The period appointed in God's purpose for the destruction of Antichrist, and for the kingdoms of this world to become the Kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ had not yet arrived.' Indeed, twenty years of persecution reduced the Reformed Presbyterians of Scotland to a small number, and the Church of Scotland established after the Revolution was an 'apostate establishment.' Patronage was restored, and the congregations could no longer choose their own ministers. 'Discipline was relaxed, immorality and heresy were tolerated in the Church, and the remembrance of the reformation was fast declining.' Moreover, the Protestant Churches in general have been declining in purity since the middle of the seventeenth century—due to a skeptical philosophy, the expansion of commerce, and the mistaken ideas of civil and religious liberty.<sup>71</sup>

However, in the face of all this apostasy the Reformed Presbyterians have remained steadfast. 'This visible Covenant Society was indeed small and despised. They resolved, however, as witnesses, to maintain a faithful testimony, and like their brethren, the primitive disciples, to go forth to their Redeemer without the camp, bearing his reproach' (*cf.* Heb. 13:13).<sup>72</sup>

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very unjust, from giving law to enthusiastic sectaries who disturbed civil society, to legislating for the Church itself.'

70. *RPE*, 78.

71. *RPE*, 80, 94, 121, 109, 74.

72. *RPE*, 110. For an acute analysis of the ecclesiastical scene in eight-

*Reformation Principles Exhibited* proper is the declarative part of the Testimony.<sup>73</sup> It is the standing, or fixed, testimony of the Church, containing ‘principles capable of universal application’ to Reformed Presbyterians, not only in Great Britain or America, but in any nation on earth.<sup>74</sup>

The *Declaration and Testimony* is divided into chapters, containing chiefly a number of affirmative propositions. Under each proposition there are written out various supporting proof texts. Each chapter closes with a number of propositions to which the Church is opposed, prefaced by the remark: ‘We therefore condemn the following *errors*, and testi-

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eenth century America (which could well apply to today!), see 116 f: ‘It is not surprising that we find instances of unsteadiness and enthusiasm very frequently among the inhabitants of the United States. A deficiency in the system of education also fosters ignorance and enthusiasm. Seminaries of literature are as yet in their infancy. The plan of instruction is universally frivolous and unsubstantial. The youth are especially neglected as to religious education, and those who publicly officiate as the ministers of religion, are often altogether illiterate, and too generally superficial scholars. In this state of society, men mingling with one another daily in their callings, without respect to national or religious peculiarities, are likely, in the present degenerate state of our nature, to exchange bigotry to ancient systems for a specious liberality, participating of the nature of indifference to religion under every form. The acquisition of national independence, by cherishing enthusiasm for civil and religious liberty, did, by a very natural perversion, contribute to render the public mind impatient of the restrictions of a regular ecclesiastical system.’

73. The original edition of the *Testimony* is entitled *Reformation Principles Exhibited By the Reformed Presbyterian Church in the United States of America*, 1807.

74. *RPE*, 7. Cf. 140 f.: ‘After mature deliberation, the Presbytery resolved to exhibit their sentiments to the world in the most simple form. They were unanimous in opinion, that the Church should be one in every nation under heaven, and that the subordinate ecclesiastical standards should also be one. They were certain this could not be the case if anything local or peculiar to any one part of the world were admitted into these standards. Such an admission would necessarily prevent the unity of the Church. Truth is not local. Abstract principle is universally the same in every part of the world. The particular application of this one system, however, should be left to each part of the Church, and should be regulated by local circumstances. This application should be plain, pointed, and argumentative, adapted to convince, to persuade, and to confirm. The Presbytery expected that a period would come in which the Reformed Presbyterian Church would be found in the different nations of Europe, Asia, Africa, and America. It was their intention, in exhibiting a testimony for truth, and against error, to render it such as might be acceptable to Reformed Presbyterians in Italy and in Egypt, in India and in Tartary, as well as in Great Britain, or in the United States of America.’

fy against all who maintain them.’ There were originally 32 chapters in the Testimony, a chapter on Adoption being added in 1823 to bring the total to 33, the same number as contained in the Westminster Confession.<sup>75</sup> It is obvious to the reader that the Testimony, though original in parts, is heavily dependent on the Confession of Faith both in content and form. Its theology is basically that of the Westminster Standards. Therefore, in briefly reviewing it we need only sample its distinctive emphases.<sup>76</sup>

It is interesting that the Testimony, unlike the Confession, begins with chapters on God and Man before proceeding to Chapters III and IV on Divine Revelation and Human Reason respectively. God can reveal himself to man and has done so, embodying that revelation in sacred writings which contain ‘a complete system of faith’ and are without error (III). It is both lawful and necessary for man to exercise Reason in searching the oracles of Revelation, since ‘God addresses man in the Scriptures as a rational creature’ and since the faculty of reasoning is His gift. Human reason cannot, however, determine what God should or should not reveal, and it is not the proper standard of religious truth. For although no doctrine of Scripture is unreasonable, there are incomprehensible mysteries in the Bible (IV).

After chapters on the Fall, Election, and Christ the Mediator (V—VII), there is, unlike the Confession, a separate chapter on the Holy Spirit (VIII). After the chapter on the Covenant of Grace (IX), there is a significant series of chapters on Christ’s Satisfaction, the Gospel Offer, Regeneration, and Faith (X—XIII). The Testimony takes a very strong stand on the doctrine of particular redemption,<sup>77</sup> but maintains

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75. The chapter on Adoption was inserted as Chapter XV, thus changing the original numbering of the Chapters from XIV on. We follow the later numbering and rather than footnoting each reference place them in parentheses in the text.

76. For a summary of the similar Testimony of the Scottish RPC, see *Summary*, 1 ff (Summary).

77. This is no doubt because of the controversy on universal redemption in the Scottish Reformed Presbytery leading to the Disruption of 1753.

just as strongly that there is no inconsistency between particular redemption and an unlimited Gospel offer. For the preaching of the Gospel does not consist in telling people that Christ has died to redeem them, but in offering Christ as Saviour to all who will trust in Him. Indeed, the proper ground of faith is not one's own redemption, but the unlimited extent of the Gospel invitation and the promise of salvation to all who receive the Saviour (XI, 4; XIII, 3). Moreover, the strength of faith is determined by its fruits—namely, love, zeal, holiness, and faithfulness—not by a man's professed confidence in his own redemption (XIII, 8).

The following chapters (XIV—XIX) deal with Justification, Adoption, Repentance, Sanctification, Perseverance, and the State of Men after Death. Chapter XX on Christ's Headship is careful to maintain that the God-man's authority as Mediator is not confined to his saints, but extends to all God's creatures. 'Men, not only as saints and church members, but also in every possible relation and condition, are under obligation to subserve his gracious purposes according to his law. . . . The administration of the kingdom of providence is subordinate to the dispensation of grace' (3, 4). No rational creature can, regardless of his condition, refuse submission to Messiah without incurring guilt.

Chapter XXII on the Christian Church stresses the importance of the visible unity of the Church. 'The visible church, according to the institution of Christ the head, is ONE among all nations. The Scriptures direct, for the more convenient edification of believers, distinct congregations, and distinct judicatories, all connected under himself; but it is both the sin and the loss of professed Christians, to establish distinctions which destroy the UNITY of the church' (3).<sup>78</sup> Christian duty demands prayer and effort toward the reformation of every part of Christ's church; and, should attempts at reformation fail, separation from corrupt communions is also

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78. Cf. *RPE*, 67.

demanded (4, 5). With regard to Church-Fellowship (XXII), it is not a matter of indifference to what church a person belongs; and it is ‘criminal’ to separate from the communion of a church which maintains Christian purity in doctrine and life.<sup>79</sup>

Unlike the Westminster Confession, the Testimony has a separate chapter on Church Government (XXIII) maintaining the divine right of Presbytery.<sup>80</sup> Chapter XXIV on Christian Worship vigorously declares that divine revelation, and not conscience, is the supreme standard regulating all modes of worship. There is also strong emphasis on prayer.

It is the duty of every man to maintain a devout frame of mind, and to devote to secret prayer, at least, a part of every evening and morning. Families are under obligation to worship the great God socially, by singing Psalms, reading the Scriptures, and prayer, each night and day, and the head of the family should take care that these duties be performed, and that regular attendance be given by every member of the family (4). Frequent private gatherings for worship are also enjoined as well as the public worship of the Sabbath—which, incidentally, comprehends the 24 hours, from midnight to midnight, of the first day of the week (5, 6). The singing of the Psalms is a necessary part of public worship. ‘The Book of Psalms, which are of divine inspiration, is well adapted to the state of the church, and every member, in all ages and circumstances; and these Psalms, to the exclusion of all *imitations* and uninspired compositions, are to be used in social worship’ (8). Written forms of prayer, as well as the reading of sermons, are unauthorized in Scripture and thus are to have no part in divine worship (7, 9).

Then follows chapters on the Sacraments (XXV), Religious Fasting and Thanksgiving (XXVII), and Marriage (XXVIII). The chapter on Oaths and Covenants (XXVII) is

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79. For a more explicit account of the RP position on church communion, see the end of the present chapter.

80. *Cf.* XXIII, 1: ‘Christ, the Head and Lawgiver has appointed in his word a particular form of government for the New Testament church, distinct from the civil government of the nations in which Christians live. The form of church government is to continue until the end of the world.’

significant in view of the later history of the Church. All legitimate swearing, by virtue of its very nature, is a solemn act of religious worship; it should not be withheld when required by a morally constituted civil or church authority, 'provided there be nothing sinful connected with it' (1-3).<sup>81</sup> Religious covenanting, as an ordinance of God, is a duty under the New Covenant; and it is lawful for a civil society to enter into covenant with God (4). 'Covenants entered into by an individual or a community, continue binding upon those who enter into them, either personally or by their representatives, so long as such persons live, unless the covenants have limited their own duration to a certain other period' (5).

The chapter on Civil Government (XXIX) is likewise significant in view of the later history of the Church. Civil society is a divine institution, to which all are bound to participate. 'It is the duty of all men voluntarily to form civil societies, establishing such authority as may best tend to preserve order, liberty, and religion among them; and it is lawful for them to model their constitutions of government in such a manner as may appear most suitable to them, provided such constitutions, in their principles and distribution of power, be in nothing contrary to the divine law' (2). In the administration of government, obedience for conscience sake is due to the civil magistrate. However, no power which persecutes the Church or authorizes false religion is sanctioned by God, and should not be supported as a moral institution (3).<sup>82</sup>

Thus chapter XXX deals with The Right of Dissent from a

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81. 'The Christian is nevertheless to take care, that he testify to the world; that although he makes oath before men, he is not to be understood as holding communion, in this solemn religious act of worship, with unqualified administrators' (3).

82. As for Christians living in heathen nations, we read: 'It is lawful for Christians residing in nations in which the light of the gospel has not been generally diffused, to continue in submission to such authority as may exist over them, agreeably to the law of nature, which, where revelation does not exist, is the only standard of civil duty. In such cases the infidelity of the ruler cannot make void the just authority conferred upon him by the constitution' (5). For the duty of Christian magistrate's, see XXIX, 6, 7.

Constitution of Civil Government. This privilege is explained as follows: ‘Civil society *being a voluntary association*, the nation is not bound to admit to all its peculiar privileges every person who may reside within the reach of its power; nor is every person dwelling within the limits of a nation under obligation to incorporate with the national society’ (1). What then is the Christian’s responsibility to civil authority?

It is the duty of Christians, for the sake of peace and order, and in humble resignation to God's good providence, to conform to the common regulations of society in things lawful; but to profess allegiance to no constitution of government which is in hostility to the kingdom of Christ, the Head of the church, and the Prince of the kings of the earth (2).

Christians should, moreover, testify against national evils in the name of moral and spiritual reformation; and in doing so should be willing to relinquish temporal advantages, lest they mar their testimony or lay a stumblingblock in the path of weaker brethren (4).<sup>83</sup>

After chapters on Church Discipline (XXXI) and on Ministerial Visitation and Catechizing (XXXII),<sup>84</sup> there is the final, all important, chapter on Testimony Bearing (XXXIII). The burden of the Chapter is that the Bible is *not* the only proper testimony of the Church; it may be given here in full as a fitting conclusion to *Reformation Principles Exhibited*:

1. Christians are WITNESSES for God among men; and, having in their possession the testimony of God in the Holy Scriptures, it is the duty of the church to apply the doctrines of inspiration in stating and defending truth, and in condemning all contrary errors, bearing witness against all who maintain them.

2. The testimony of the church is progressive, in order to oppose and condemn the novel errors which each period may produce. And every generation is to take care that the truth, as stated and defended by their predecessors, shall be maintained and faithfully transmitted, together with the result of their own contentings, to the succeeding generation.

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83. It is noteworthy that, as Christians in their dissent are to pay taxes, they have a right to the civil protection of life, liberty, and property; also, that Christians are *not* to effect moral reformation by resorting to the sword.

84. Note: ‘The elders of the congregation are, in their station, to attend to the visitation of the flock, with or without the minister’ (3).

3. The church may not recede from a more clear and particular testimony to a more general and evasive one. But the witnesses must proceed in finishing their testimony, rendering it more pointed and complete, until God shall, according to his promise, overthrow the empire of darkness; and introduce the millennial state, in which the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

### The Covenanter Church

In his analysis of the Covenanter Church, nineteenth century Reformed Presbyterian David Scott mentions three distinctives: 1) the duty of religious covenanting; 2) the universal dominion of Christ the Mediator; and 3) the universal application of Scripture as the rule of duty in all things, civil as well as religious.<sup>85</sup> Likewise, twentieth century RP J. G. Vos reduces Covenanter distinctives to three basic ones: 1) perpetual obligation of the Scottish Covenants; 2) the sole headship of Christ over the Church; and 3) Christian civil government. He sums up his analysis as follows:

Historically speaking, the formal principle of the Covenanter movement is the perpetual obligation of the National Covenant and the Solemn League and Covenant, and the material principle is the mediatorial kingship of Christ over the nations. And as already stated, both of these principles and also the principle of the sole headship of Christ over the Church can be reduced to a single fundamental principle: *Ius Divinum*—divine right or *the rights of God*, which are to be recognized in the Church, the State and every sphere of life.<sup>86</sup>

James McKinney would have agreed with Vos' analysis. In 1797 he published a sermon entitled *The Rights of God*, in

85. D. Scott, *Distinctive Principles of the Reformed Presbyterian Church*, 1841.

86. Vos, 230. See 183-230 for the full discussion of these three principles. For another attempt at boiling down *distinctive* Covenanter principles, see Glasgow, 56 ff. Glasgow for some strange reason mentions these five: 1) the descending obligations of the Covenants; 2) exclusion of all members of secret societies; 3) inspired Psalmody; 4) exclusion of instrumental music; 5) distribution of tokens for the communion service. For an attempt to boil down the *basic* principles, see M'Feeters, *op. cit.*, 67 ff. M'Feeters claims that the Reformed Presbyterian Church is 1) *Calvinistic* in doctrine, 2) *Presbyterian* in government, 3) *Reformed* in worship; and 4) *Covenanted* in relation to her Lord and King.

which he argues that all of human society ought consciously to organize itself in obedience to God. Indeed the complexities of society demand a common center. ‘Enlightened reason must at once perceive that such complex machinery as that which composes the aggregate mass of human interests, movements, and ends, must have a common centre on which its stupendous revolutions may safely depend. This situation God has reserved for himself.’ However, society is in fact deranged by ‘apostasy from God.’ The first step, therefore, in removing the evils of society is to recognize and study the rights of God, one of which is to prescribe laws for human society. In fact, true civil liberty can only be attained through obedience to God’s law, not through the infidelity of the French Revolution. It is foolish to believe that revealed religion is hostile to the just rights of man.<sup>87</sup>

However, neither the church nor the world had consistently recognized that their ultimate good lay in recognizing the rights of God. Consequently, those who did consistently recognize His rights had become a small remnant society, and this society a small remnant Church; so that the Covenanters had come to have a strong remnant consciousness, just as they had come to have a strong reformation consciousness. As their reformation consciousness had its roots in the Second Reformation, so their remnant consciousness went back to the Killing Times—when they had heeded the plea of Richard Cameron: ‘Let us then cry to Him to spare a remnant in whom He will be glorified.’<sup>88</sup>

The Reformed Presbyterian Church conceived of itself as that remnant maintained by God to be the vanguard of the Reformation to come as the consummation of the Reforma-

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87. J. McKinney, *The Rights of God*, 1797. Cf. Carson, *History*, 80-82. We may lament the fact that the other two sermons in this series, entitled *The Rights of Christ as Mediator* and *The Rights of Men*, were lost at the time of McKinney’s death.

88. J. Howie (ed.), *Sermons Delivered in Times of Persecution in Scotland, by Sufferers for the Royal Prerogatives of Jesus Christ*, 1880, 443. This fascinating volume includes sermons of Cameron and Cargill.

tion that had already begun. The Church, therefore, had to be a closely-knit group with strict terms of communion to which every member must comply. These terms are designed to embrace nothing but divine truth and to reject nothing for which the church has faithfully contended (*RPE XXII*, 4). As drawn up by the Reformed Presbytery in 1807, they are as follows:<sup>89</sup>

1. An acknowledgement of the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the word of God.

2. An acknowledgement that the whole doctrine of the Westminster Confession of Faith, and the Catechisms, Larger and Shorter, are agreeable unto, and founded upon, the Scriptures.

3. An acknowledgement of the divine right of one unalterable form of Church Government and manner of worship (*i.e.*, those in the Westminster Form of Church Government and Directory for Worship).

4. An acknowledgement that Public Covenanting is an ordinance of God, to be observed by Churches and Nations under the New Testament Dispensation (including subscription to the National Covenant and the Solemn League and Covenant, together with acknowledgement 'that the obligation of these Covenants extends to those who were represented in the taking of them, although removed to this or any other part of the world, in so far as they bind to duties not peculiar to the Church in the British Isles, but applicable in all lands').

5. An approbation of the faithful contendings of the martyrs of Jesus (*i.e.*, those Reformed Presbyterians who died contending against Paganism, Popery, Prelacy, and immoral civil Constitutions).

6. An approbation of the doctrines contained in the Declaration and Testimony of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America, in defence of truth and in opposition to error.

These, together with due subordination in the Lord to the authority of the Reformed Presbytery in North America, and a regular life and conversation, form the bonds of our ecclesiastical communion.<sup>90</sup>

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89. Actually the terms were *revised* (*Minutes*, 1798-1809, 39, 41) apparently from those which were previously in use, of which no record has been preserved. We may assume that the Church had used the terms adopted by the Scottish Reformed Presbytery in 1761. These may be found in Hutchison, 213; and those who consult them will see that they are very similar to those of 1807. Cf. *The Constitution of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America* (Old Light), 1949, 'History of the Standards' (iii-vi).

90. The words outside the parentheses are the *ipsissima verba* of the Presbytery; those inside are the author's summary of the additional content of each term. These terms are found in Glasgow, 97 f., who mistakenly traces them back to 1806. For the state of the terms in both the Old Light and New Light communions in 1888, see *ibid.*, 98-100. The terms in their various stages of revision are found as an appendix in most of the various Old light and New Light editions of

Such was the old Reformed Presbyterian Church in America!

In summary, the Covenanters were historic Presbyterians, and the Reformed Presbyterian Church an historic Presbyterian Church. Their formal principle was the Bible; their material principle, the Gospel as defined in the Confession of Faith; and their practical principle, Covenant life in a Presbyterian Church. But they were obsessed with the notion of their responsibility to apply these basic principles to all aspects of human life and society; the rigid application of the truth was their obsession, so that they tended to elevate their conception of Covenant life to the place of a formal principle which set the boundaries of all their thoughts and activities. Consequently, their material principle tended to become the Gospel applied to both church and state, rather than simply the Gospel. This application of what was to the Covenanters a Reformed Gospel they understood in terms of the notion of reformation, which also became an obsession with them. This reformation, following naturally from their doctrine of the mediatorial authority of Christ over all things, was to be effected in both church and state. The expected goal in the church was a Reformed Presbyterian Church independent of civil authority. The expected goal in the state was Christian civil government; and this notion, due to historical circumstances, tended to become their practical principle.

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*RPE*. For the modern Old Light version, see *Constitution*, 333 f. The Reformed Presbytery also revised (*Minutes*, 1798-1809, 39, 41) in 1807 the Formula of Questions to be put to ministers and ruling elders at their ordination. The various versions of these are usually found as an appendix in the various editions of *RPE*.