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Quarter-Centennial

—OF THE—

PITTSBURGH

R. P. Congregation.

1866 to 1891.

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OF THE

COVENANTER CHURCH.

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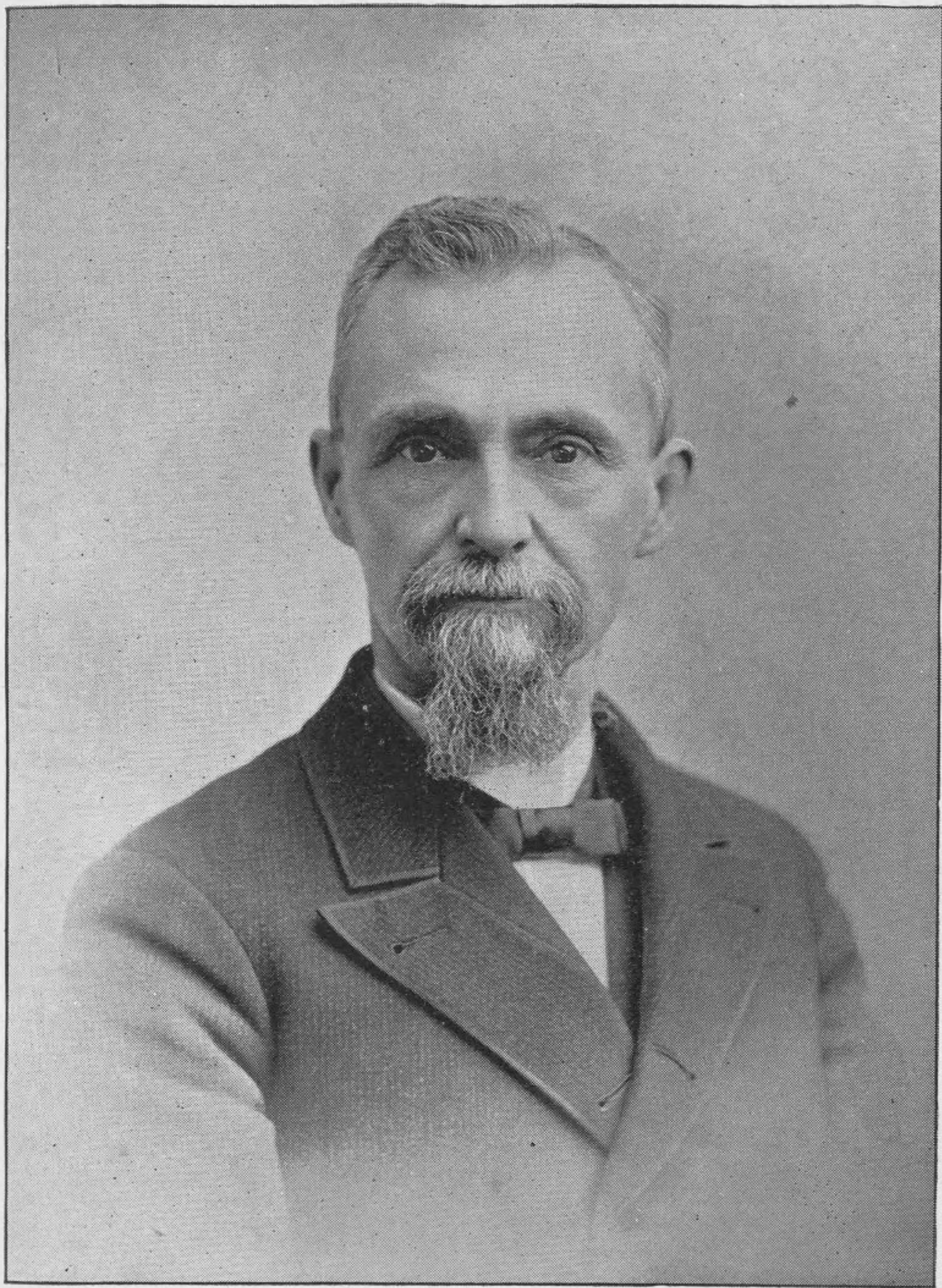
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# QUARTER CENTENNIAL

—OF—

## PITTSBURGH R. P. CONGREGATION.



David McAllister

QUARTER-CENTENNIAL  
OF THE  
PITTSBURGH COVENANTER CONGREGATION.

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On May 14, 1866, the Rev. A. M. Milligan was installed pastor of the Pittsburgh Reformed Presbyterian congregation. The twenty-fifth anniversary of this installation was judged the most fitting time for the commemorative services recorded in this volume, although the reorganization of the congregation took place on October 31, 1865.

The nineteen years lying between Dr. Milligan's installation and his death on May 7, 1885, include the most of the work reviewed in the following pages. Nearly two years and a half followed during which the congregation was without a pastor. On October 21, 1887, the second pastor was installed, leaving only three years and a half since that time to fall within the Quarter-Centennial now commemorated.

The programme adopted by the session of the congregation for this occasion is given in substance in the table of contents preceding. Suitable decorations were provided by the ladies of the congregation. In a curved line back of the pulpit was the motto, in large and beautiful letter-

ing, "For Christ's Crown and Covenant." Beneath this arch were various practical applications of Christ's kingly claims, such as, "The Sabbath," "National Reform," "Temperance," and "Missions," with the figures 1866 to the spectator's left, and 191 to the right. Across the space below were the words, "Be thou faithful unto death." On the front of the gallery this passage of Scripture was continued in the words, "And I will give thee a crown of life." On the pulpit platform to the speakers' right was a beautiful silk blue banner, furnished by Mr. Matthew Tibby, with the motto in gold, "For Christ's Crown and Covenant," and on the left an easel with a fine crayon portrait of Dr. A. M. Milligan, the work of Mr. Andrew Donaldson, one of the mutes of the congregation.

The discourses and papers are now given in regular order. They were extended over nine days beginning with the afternoon of Sabbath, May 10, and closing on Monday evening, May 18. The weather during all this period was favorable. This, together with the keen interest felt in the occasion itself, kept up a full attendance during all the protracted services. The meeting of Synod, to convene in the same church building within two weeks, it was already known would be one of the most important ever held. The entire exercises of the Quarter-Centennial were in God's good providence a special preparation to pastor and people for the fiery ordeal that so soon followed.

A beautiful spring-time Sabbath, May 10, invited the members of the congregation to the opening services of the commemoration. Old and young responded to the invitation. The following discourse by the pastor was listened to with appreciative interest. It is reproduced here from the *Commercial Gazette*, in which it appeared the next morning in full:

## THE COVENANTER CHURCH OF THE UNITED STATES AND HER COVENANT.

“ This shall be written for the generation to come. ”—PSALM 102: 18.

Each generation writes its record for the generation following. The successors who read the record ought to understand it more fully than the generation that made it. The mists of prejudice have cleared away, and the record stands out in clearer light. It may take a number of generations to secure a thoroughly impartial and just judgment of a man, a social body, or a cause; but that judgment will at length be given. Such an impartial judgment has never yet been passed by the masses of the American people upon the Covenanter church. Her steadfast and unwavering position on the sin of slavery, it is true, has been vindicated; and she is to-day receiving the highest honor for the very course that in her early history, and in the exciting days of the anti-slavery struggle, brought upon her hatred and reproach. But much still needs to be done in the way of dispelling the fogs of ignorance and prejudice which prevent the rendering, on the part of multitudes, of a just judgment upon the Covenanter church of the United States. It is admitted generally by intelligent citizens that the influence of Covenanters upon the life of the nation, in proportion to their number, is most extraordinary. This memorial celebration is a fitting occasion for us to try to read and interpret to our generation the records of our fathers as these have been impressed upon the social, ecclesiastical, and political life of the United States.

Let us examine, then, in the first place, very briefly, the origin and history of American Covenanters, and secondly, the principles and obligations of their Covenant entered into in 1871.

First, then, we shall briefly trace their origin and history. The Covenanters of Scotland were originally called simply the Reformed church. In the days of John Knox the Scottish kirk was reformed from the corruptions of popery. This reformation culminated in 1560. The Reformed church was Presbyterian in its government, and thence came the name Reformed Presbyterian. About this time various covenants were sworn

in different parts of Scotland, and at length in 1581 a national covenant was entered into—that is, a social bond, or compact, or agreement between the king and his subjects, with the Lord as a party to the transaction, acknowledging God Himself as Lord of all, His Word as a supreme law, and Christ as not only the Head of the church, but as the Governor among the nations; and pledging the Covenanters to the maintenance of the reformation from popery. The national covenant was renewed at intervals in exigencies of the nation's history, until in 1638 took place that memorable scene in the Greyfriars' churchyard at Edinburgh, when many opened the veins in their arms and signed the covenant with their blood—a kind of prophetic anticipation of what took place in the years soon following and in later years preceding the revolution settlement of 1688, when many thousand of martyrs sealed their covenant with their blood. In connection with the work of the famous Westminster Assembly, that sat in the Jerusalem chamber of Westminster Abbey in London for over five and a half years from July 1, 1643, and that gave to the world the Westminster standards, was the framing of the solemn league and covenant, which bound together in the maintenance of the reformation the three kingdoms of Scotland, England, and Ireland. These memorable deeds appropriately gave the name Covenanters to as patriotic and devoted a band of Christians as were ever united in the cause of God and humanity.

The dark days of persecution, extending over a considerable part of the quarter of a century or more preceding the revolution of 1688, reduced the numbers of faithful Covenanters to but a handful of "Hill-folk," so called from their wandering in the mountains; or "Cameronians," a name derived from Richard Cameron, beheaded at Ayr's Moss; or "Society-people," a people who, having at times no minister to preach to them, held their social prayer-meetings in place of regular public services. These were the days of Peden and Cameron; of Cargill and Renwick; of conventicles or field-preaching, with watchmen on distant mountain-heights to signal the approach of bloodthirsty dragoons; of the tortures of the "boot" and "thumb-screw," and of triumphant martyr deaths. These were the times of the Covenanters' Night Hymn, when, in the sad lament of the persecuted remnant, they were constrained to say:



“ We have no hearth—the ashes lie  
 In blackness where they brightly shone ;  
 We have no home—the desert sky  
 Our covering, earth our couch alone ;  
 We have no heritage —deprived  
 Of these, we ask not such on earth ;  
 Our hearts are sealed ; we seek in heaven  
 For heritage, and home and hearth.”

And these were the days of heroism and self-sacrifice ; of undaunted courage and unwavering maintenance of truth, and of the faithfulness even unto death that won the martyr's crown.

“ Father in heaven ! we turn not back,  
 Though briars and thorns choke up the path ;  
 Rather the torture of the rack  
 Than tread the winepress of Thy wrath.  
 Let thunders crash ; let torrents pour ;  
 Let whirlwinds churn the howling sea ;  
 What is the turmoil of an hour  
 To an eternal calm with Thee ?”

No wonder that Covenanters have been the friends of civil and religious liberty. The unflinching maintenance of the right may be misinterpreted as intolerance and bigotry, but their own devotion to true liberty of conscience has cost themselves too dear to permit them to esteem it lightly in the case of any of their fellow men.

#### SCOTCH-IRISH COVENANTERS.

Before the swearing of the great national covenant in 1638 Scotch Presbyterians had gone over in large numbers to the province of Ulster. For a number of years, but mainly through determined efforts at the time of the Restoration under Charles to overthrow Presbyterianism in Ulster, many congregations were left without pastors, and the necessity for conventicles, or field-preaching, arose here as in Scotland. Prayer-meetings often took the place of pulpit services. The society people held together with the same unfaltering devotion as in the land of their fathers. And to the present day, through many seasons of sore trial, the Covenanter church of the North of Ireland has maintained her faithful testimony. As she was nourished from Scotland, so in turn she gave freely out of her

own often scanty supply for the need of the struggling brethren on this side the Atlantic, and not a few who came to this country from the Presbyterian Synod of Ulster, found themselves in far closer harmony with American Covenanters than with any other body, and accordingly cast in their lot with them. Thus from the land of the Covenants which will yet be her revival, according to the old reformer's prayer, and from the North of Ireland, the Covenanters of the United States originally came. Up to the present day accessions are still made from the same sources.

#### NATIVE-BORN AMERICAN COVENANTERS.

But while it is true that the Covenanter church of the United States traces her origin to Scotland and the North of Ireland, it must at the same time be remembered that a very large proportion of her present membership is native-born. Many Covenanter families run back through successive generations to early colonial times. Besides, not a few have united with the Covenanter church of the United States, who have no connection by birth or ancestry with either Scotland or Ireland, and who have been won to the acceptance of her principles, like many from other Presbyterian churches beyond the sea, by the simple purpose of following God's Word as the rule of their life. They have become Covenanters because they believe that Covenanter principles are drawn from and founded on the Bible, and are essential to the salvation of the nation, as well as the highest interests of the church herself.

#### THE COVENANTER CHURCH TRULY AMERICAN.

To call the Covenanters of America Scotch Covenanters is, therefore, even a greater mistake than to speak of the Reformed church of America as the Dutch church. They are in many cases, like other Americans, the descendants of Scotch or Irish ancestry, and in some cases they are immigrants that have come to make this their home; but they are all American Covenanters. As will be seen a little further on, they are as thoroughly American in their principles as any other branch of the Christian church. Indeed, it is the testimony of important witnesses that if there be one part of the church which more than any other prepared the way for American independence, and the establishment of a republic with civil and religious liberty as its distinguishing feature, that part of the Christian church is the old persecuted body that flung to the

breeze the blue banner of the Covenant. The same principles that were expressed in such old Covenanter documents as the "Rutherglen Declaration and Testimony," the "Queensferry Paper," and the "Sanquhar Declaration," were the same that found expression in the Revolution Settlement of 1688, in the Declaration of the Convention of Estates, when the prince of Orange came to the throne of Britain, and that afterward shone out on this continent in the American Declaration of Independence. Such historians as Bancroft have traced the principles of American liberty and free institutions to the faithful contentings of the Covenanters. And Thomas Carlyle has said: "How many earnest, rugged Cromwells, Knoxes, poor peasant Covenanters, wrestling, battling for very life in rough, miry places, have to struggle and suffer and fall, greatly censured, bemired—before a beautiful revolution of '88 can step over them in official pumps and silk stockings with universal three-times-three."

#### EARLY AMERICAN HISTORY.

Passing from our rapid sketch of her origin, we must sketch in still briefer outline the history of the Covenanter church in America for about a full century, or from 1774 to 1871, the year of the swearing of the Covenant the principles of which are to claim our attention in the second part of this discourse.

The most noteworthy event in early American Covenanter history is the act of covenant renovation at Middle Octorara, Pennsylvania, in 1743, when the same principles of civil and religious liberty that had been embodied in the papers already referred to, such as the Rutherglen and Sanquhar Declarations, were most solemnly subscribed and sworn. From that renewing of the covenants in Pennsylvania under the leadership of the Rev. Alexander Craighead, went out the patriotic influence that led to similar expressions of American loyalty, as against the usurpations of George II., and afterward George III., until at Mecklenberg, North Carolina, to which place Mr Craighead had removed from Pennsylvania, was issued in May, 1775, the famous Mecklenberg Declaration, which in so marked a manner anticipated the Declaration of Independence of July 4, 1776.

#### A REMARKABLE COINCIDENCE.

A coincidence not to be overlooked is the fact that the scattered Covenanters of America were formally organized into an

ecclesiastical body the very year in which the Continental Congress came into existence. In March, 1774, the Reformed Presbytery, or the first Covenanter Presbytery, was organized at Paxtang, Pennsylvania, and in September of the same year the Continental Congress first met in Philadelphia, only about a hundred miles eastward in the same State, or rather Colony. The Covenanter church of America, as an organic body, and the American nation, with one representative Congress, date from the same year. But more than this coincidence in dates is the coincidence in the principles of civil and religious liberty maintained. The various acts of the Continental Congress, such as its "Address to the People of Great Britain," of October 21, 1774, its "Address to the Inhabitants of the Colonies," of the same date, and its "Address to the Inhabitants of Quebec," of October 26, 1774, breathe the same spirit as that of Covenanters in opposition to "secret enemies, whose intrigues, for several years past, have been wholly exercised in sapping the foundations of civil and religious liberty." (See Journal of Congress, Vol. I., pp. 27-31, 39-44, 55, 64.)

#### REORGANIZATION OF THE COVENANTER CHURCH.

Passing over the story of the union of the Covenanter and Associate churches, which constituted the Associate Reformed church in 1782, and which proved the disorganization of the Covenanter church, while yet many individuals held fast to her principles, we come to the reorganization of the Reformed Presbytery of America, at Philadelphia, in 1798. From this point we must hastily pass on to the adoption of the Covenant in 1871. A somewhat fuller review of this period of Covenanter history will be called for in a subsequent discourse to be given next Wednesday evening, on "the Covenanter church of Pittsburgh." It will answer our purpose, at present, simply to mention the issue of "the Declaration and Testimony of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in America" in 1806, and of "the Book of Discipline" in 1819. It should be added that amendments to both these parts of Covenanter fundamental law have been adopted at various intervals since.

The unhappy division of 1833 which is of peculiar interest just now, because of the existing troubles in the Covenanter body, will be noticed later on in this discourse.

This brief summary of the origin and history of American Covenanters must suffice in this connection. The main thing

before us to-day is their Covenant—its principles and obligations.

#### PRINCIPLES AND OBLIGATIONS OF THE COVENANT OF 1871.

In considering this part of the subject, further passages of the history of Covenanters in this country will require more or less attention. These passages, having their bearing upon the most fundamental teachings and practices of the Covenanter church, will prove necessarily the most interesting and momentous in the history of American Reformed Presbyterianism.

#### THE NATURE OF A SOCIAL COVENANT.

As we come to the examination of the principles of the Covenant entered into by American Covenanters, it is important to consider first of all the nature of a social covenant.

Every social being must have an ultimate standard by which to reach the decision and action of the organic unit. If the mere will of the majority is ultimate moral rule, there can be no definite standard. With the fickle changes of the multitude, the so-called moral standard changes. Covenanting recognizes that God has given ultimate moral law for every relation of human life. It thus makes God Himself a party to a social covenant, as the members of the social body agree with each other to have regard to God's will as ultimate in their sphere of action, and as they solemnly bind themselves to seek the ends set forth for their social organization in His law. Their interpretation of His will made known in nature, history, and providence, and especially in revelation, may undergo many changes. But they have an acknowledged standard to which their covenant requires them to appeal. Such a social compact does not originate the social being. It is the social being already in existence that makes the compact or covenant. And as both the nation and the church are social beings in the sphere of moral law, they are alike required to observe this duty of entering into covenant with God.

The principle of covenanting has been exemplified in our own land, as well as in Scotland and in Bible history.

The first act of covenanting in this country was the Compact entered into in the cabin of the Mayflower by the Pilgrim Fathers just before landing at Plymouth Rock. This Compact reads: "In the name of God, Amen. We, whose names are underwritten, having undertaken for the glory of God and advance-

ment of the Christian faith, and the honor of our king and country, a voyage to plant the first colony in the northern part of Virginia, do by these presents solemnly and mutually covenant and combine ourselves together into a civil body politic." This first of all distinctively American state papers embodies every essential element of a social and national covenant.

Akin to the Mayflower Compact is the Rhode Island Covenant of March, 1838. This reads: "We, whose names are underwritten, do hereby solemnly, in the presence of Jehovah, incorporate ourselves into a body politic; and as he shall help, will submit our persons, lives, and estates unto our Lord Jesus Christ, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords, and to all those perfect and absolute laws of his, given us in his holy Word of truth, to be judged and guided thereby."

And to this original idea of American political and national duty and life, many other documents have corresponded, like the Articles of Confederation of the New England Colonies, and the Declaration of Independence itself, which was careful to acknowledge our dependence on Almighty God, while it proclaimed our independence of an unjust and oppressive human authority. These acknowledgments of God in this sphere of political and national life are the application of the principles of covenanting. Men in civil life have felt the need of God, and have laid hold upon his covenant of mercy, just as Israel did of old under Moses and Joshua and kings like Asa and Josiah. And to these principles of God's immutable law our land must yet return before it can be called Beulah—a land married to its divine Lord and King.

#### THE COVENANTER'S CHURCH COVENANT.

The principle of social covenanting applies to churches as well as to nations, and as a matter of course, Covenanters have their own ecclesiastical covenant. American Covenanters have always recognized the obligations that come down the line of posterity. Just as the United States to-day are bound by the compacts of former generations, so American Covenanters have acknowledged the binding force in this land of moral covenant obligations entered into by the fathers in other lands. The church has had unbroken continuity irrespective of territorial locality, and the obligations of ecclesiastical covenants bind posterity whether in one land or another to the duties that belong to the church in every land. Hence these acts of

covenanting are strictly acts of covenant renovation. That is, at specially critical times in their history, the members of the church solemnly renew their covenant with God and with each other, and in doing so make pointed application of the immutable principles of the divine law to the moral issues of the land and the day.

#### THE COVENANT OF 1871.

Thus in the act of covenanting in this city and in this church in 1871, American Covenanters made the application for this land and this period of the church's history of the unchanging principles of God's Word. In the midst of the already clearly defined and emergent issues of our own land and our own times; in the whole sphere of moral duties, in individual, family, ecclesiastical, and civil relations, this Covenant sets forth the teachings and obligations of divine law, and engages all who enter into the covenanted society to regulate all their duties accordingly. And now the important task that remains is to sum up in comprehensive form the principles and obligations of this Covenant.

#### PERSONAL CONSECRATION TO GOD.

The first principle of the Covenant is that of the unreserved consecration of the Covenanter to the service of his Lord and Saviour. Covenanters take the triune Jehovah to be their God, and give themselves to this God to be his devoted people. By their Covenant they are married to Christ. And any breach of their covenant vows is spiritual infidelity to the divine Husband of the bride, the church. The Covenant begins with a frank and full confession of sin, an utter renunciation of all human merit, and an unqualified surrender of soul and body to Christ. Its key-note is: "Ye are not your own; for ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's." Listen to the language of the Covenant itself: "With renunciation of all dependence on our righteousness as the ground of pardon and acceptance with God, we receive for ourselves and for our children the Lord Jesus Christ as He is offered in the gospel to be our Saviour, the Holy Spirit to be our enlightener, sanctifier and guide, and God the Father to be our portion; we approve and accept of the covenant of grace as all our salvation and all our desire, and take the moral law as dispensed by the Mediator, Christ, to be the rule of our life, and to be obeyed by us in all its pre-

cepts and prohibitions." It is the embodiment of the oath of Israel's covenant at Sinai—"All that the Lord hath said will we do and be obedient."

#### COVENANTER SUBORDINATE STANDARDS.

This second principle and obligation of the Covenant need not be enlarged upon. It will serve the present purpose to note two or three points: 1. The necessity of subordinate standards which interpret officially and authoritatively, though not infallibly, the one ultimate rule of faith and practice—God's inspired Word. Every social body should agree, as already seen, to accept God's revealed law as ultimate in all matters of faith and moral duty. But the collective body cannot escape the responsibility of interpreting and applying that one infallible rule. This can be done only by a summary of doctrines and a system of government and discipline drawn from the Divine Word. These will determine the doctrines which are to be believed and the duties which are to be performed under the authority of the organic body, the church, as the repository of the authority of Christ Himself. Just as a nation must have its constitutional law, so must the church have hers. And while the church's subordinate standards are not in all respects the exact equivalent of a nation's constitutional law, yet they must determine the application of the divine law as interpreted by the highest ecclesiastical authority to all matters of belief and morals. 2. The subordinate standards accepted by the Covenant are the Westminster standards, supplemented by the Declaratory Testimony of the Reformed Presbyterian or Covenanter church as to doctrine, and by the Book of Discipline of the same church as to matters of order and government. These subordinate standards are not clothed with divine authority like that of the Bible, but they have the authority of truth derived from the Bible, and the authority of the church, which comes from Christ himself. The way always remains open for the amendment of these subordinate standards in due and orderly manner if in any respect whatever they are out of harmony with the one infallible law. But for any member of a social body to assail the accepted standards of its organic life is of the nature of disloyalty and treason. How aggravated is this assault on the vital principles of a church when the assailant has bound himself by a most solemn covenant engagement to the maintenance of these very principles which he



disloyally seeks to destroy. God's Word pronounces one of its most scathing denunciations on covenant-breakers.

#### EVANGELISTIC AND MISSION WORK.

A third Covenant obligation, taken out of its order, is the dedication of the Covenanters "to the great work of making known God's light and salvation among the nations. Profoundly conscious of past remissness and neglect, we will henceforth, by our prayers, pecuniary contributions and personal exertions seek the revival of pure and undefiled religion, and the conversion of Jews and Gentiles to Christ, that all men may be blessed in Him, and that all nations may call Him blessed." Evangelistic and mission work, at home and abroad, has been a distinguishing feature of the Covenanter church. So far from experiencing any diminution of the missionary spirit by other covenant engagements, it has been proven that the very congregations that have been most zealous in the great work of National Reform have been the most active and successful in evangelistic and missionary effort.

#### PRAYERS AND LABORS FOR THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH.

This Covenant obligation reads: "Believing the church to be one, and that all the saints have communion with God and with one another in the same covenant; believing, moreover, that schism and sectarianism are sinful in themselves, and inimical to true religion, and trusting that divisions shall cease and the people of God become one Catholic church over all the earth, we will pray and labor for the visible oneness of the church of God in our own land and throughout the world on the basis of truth and scriptural order. Considering it a principal duty of our profession to cultivate a holy brotherhood, we will strive to maintain Christian friendship with pious men of every name, and feel and act as one with all in every land who pursue this grand end. And, as a means of securing this great result, we will by dissemination and application of the principles of truth herein professed, and by cultivating and exercising Christian charity, labor to remove stumbling blocks and gather into one the scattered and divided friends of truth and righteousness." This recognizes that the church of Christ is one by her divine constitution, as our Testimony and all our standards recognize the same truth, and that it is the duty of the church to manifest that unity visibly to the world in her organization.

## MISTAKEN EFFORTS AT CHURCH UNION.

The great mistake of many is to suppose that unity can be secured by the surrender of truth. The church of Christ as the pillar and ground of the truth is not at liberty to surrender a single doctrine or principle. All truth is God's truth, and any compromise of truth by the church for the sake of so-called unity will defeat the end in view. It is contended that the Covenanter church should lay aside from her Testimony the admitted Scriptural doctrine of dissent from an immorally constituted civil government. This will bring her into unity with the United Presbyterian church. By the same logic, the latter must lay aside her testimony for a Scriptural psalmody to bring her into harmony and unity with the General Assembly Presbyterian church. But can the process consistently stop here? Must not this large Presbyterian body lay aside every point on which it differs from the Congregational and Methodist Episcopal churches, and so on, step by step, until a large part of Scriptural ground is surrendered? In the end what would be left? There would be no unity in the truth, and, therefore, no true church unity at all. There are principles of organic unity in the church of Christ as there are in the state. Each denomination in the church to-day is under obligation to interpret God's law, and hold every truth of Scripture precious, and buy it and not sell it, and apply it and maintain it. To surrender any truth whatever, in an agreement to unite on a basis which deliberately compromises truth, is in violation of our Covenant. But to bring the whole church of Christ into a recognition of her essential unity by a covenant that acknowledges her King, His whole law, and the duty of applying that law in every relation of life by the government and discipline of the Lord's house, is in substance the basis of truth and Scriptural order on which, in answer to our prayers and through our labors, by God's blessing, the church of God in our land and throughout the world will realize its visible oneness.

## CIVIL RELATIONS.

The covenant of 1871 is in no part more clear and happy than its formulation of the political principles of God's word. These are: 1. God is the source of all legitimate power. 2. He has instituted civil government for His own glory and the good of man. 3. He has appointed His Son, the Mediator, to headship over the nations. 4. The Bible is the supreme law

and rule in national as in all other relations. In harmony with these principles of duty are the obligations to which Covenanters have sworn as follows: "We will maintain the responsibility of nations to God, the rightful dominion of Jesus Christ over the commonwealth, and the obligation of nations to legislate in conformity with the written Word. We take ourselves sacredly bound to regulate all our relations, attachments, professions and deportment by our allegiance and loyalty to the Lord, our King, Lawgiver and Judge; and by this our oath we are pledged to promote the interests of public order and justice, to support cheerfully whatever is for the good of the commonwealth in which we dwell, and to pursue this object in all things not forbidden by the law of God, or inconsistent with public dissent from an unscriptural and immoral civil power. We will pray and labor for the peace and welfare of our country, and for its reformation by a constitutional recognition of God as the source of all power, of Jesus Christ as the Ruler of nations, of the Holy Scriptures as the supreme rule, and of the true Christian religion, and we will continue to refuse to incorporate by any act with the political body until this blessed reformation has been secured."

Two points require special attention in this connection: 1. This covenant pledges those who take it to the performance of every civil duty and the rendering of every service for the welfare of the country in the way of which stands no barrier of immorality. It is not surprising that different views have sometimes been taken as to what civil and political acts may be performed by Covenanters in harmony with their principles; in consistency with their loyalty to Christ as King.

#### THE DIVISION OF 1833.

The division of the Covenanter church in 1833 grew out of such diversity of view. Stripping that unhappy controversy of all minor questions, side issues, and lamentable personalities, we have before us a momentous question, worthy of the calm, careful and thorough examination of Christian patriots and philosophers. On the one side, gifted and scholarly men, able theologians and diligent students of political science, changed their view of the compact of the nation's written Constitution. Such eminent men as Dr. Gilbert McMasters abandoned the position of dissent and non-incorporation that had been maintained ever since the adoption of the Constitution, and did so

on the ground that this Constitution was a federal instrument and not a national fundamental law; that the United States were a league of independent sovereign commonwealths, and not a nation. Hence, they argued, we must seek for suitable acknowledgments of God and Christ and the divine law in State constitutions, and not in the federal instrument. Such acknowledgments they found to their satisfaction. Thus the ground of dissent was removed. On the other side, able ministers and laymen maintained that this is a nation, and not a mere confederacy or league; that the nation alone is clothed with sovereignty; and that its constitution is true fundamental law for one sovereign moral person. Hence, they argued, if religious acknowledgments are properly to be demanded in the Constitution of a State or Commonwealth like Pennsylvania, much more are they to be required in the written compact of the national government. In comparison with this debate of 1833 the controversy raised by members of the Covenanter church to-day is of little weight and significance. The attempt seems to be to take away the barrier to incorporation, not by denying the immorality of the compact of government, but by charges of inconsistency on the part of the church and her members, and by pleas for church union that would leave the pillar and ground of the truth without a testimony against the most flagrant iniquities of modern times.

#### POLITICAL DISSENT.

The second point under our covenant obligations as to civil relations is the duty of dissenting from the nation's adoption of an immoral constitution, and of refusing to incorporate with the governing political society. To this position the church has faithfully held. No civil act has ever been permitted which was acknowledged to be in antagonism to this position of dissent. Fighting in the army and navy for the nation's life, sitting on juries when the oath of the juror recognizes the divine law, voting for temperance amendments to State constitutions, have been permitted, as well as many other civil and political acts, but in every case with the distinct declaration that the position of dissent from the immoral compact of the godless and Christless written Constitution was at the same time steadfastly maintained.

#### THE ARGUMENT FOR POLITICAL DISSENT.

The argument for this position of dissent and non-incorpor-

ation is in brief as follows: God's law forbids Christians to be unequally yoked with unbelievers by becoming parties to any unrighteous or immoral agreement. It requires them to come out and be separate from any unscriptural and immoral association. (See II Cor. vi. 14-18; Rev. xviii. 4.) Loyal Christians must not compromise righteousness by fellowship with unrighteousness. The written Constitution is such an immoral compact, according to the interpretation of the most authoritative commentators, and the decisions of courts and the action of the government, in denying that the Christian religion has any more authoritative place in the nation, as a nation, than any false religion. The written Constitution is confessedly a compact to govern the nation without regard to the authority of the law of Christ. Such a compact, whether in business or political life, is one to which no loyal follower of Christ can consistently become a party.

#### AN EXAMPLE FROM BUSINESS.

Let us take a business company for illustration. Here is a firm or company that agrees by a written compact to run its business every day of the week. Or the compact may be unwritten yet well understood. Can a Christian consistently be a party to such a compact, by becoming or remaining a member of such a company? If the company or corporation tramples on God's day or God's law, the loyal follower of Christ must come out or be separate from it. And a political corporation in no wise differs in this respect from a business one. If it agrees to administer governmental affairs without any regard to the law of Christ; if it tramples according to its fundamental compact on the Lord's day and the Lord's authority, the consistent Christian must have no fellowship with the immoral agreement and partnership in wrong. This is the simple and unanswerable argument for the Covenanters' position of political dissent. And this is the position of power for the reformation of the nation. Let Christians generally take it, and it would not be many years until an amendment to the United States Constitution would be submitted and adopted, placing our nation in proper relations to God, and Christ, and the divine law for all moral questions in national life.

#### DISSENT VINDICATED IN THE ANTI-SLAVERY STRUGGLE.

The position of practical dissent and non-incorporation maintained by American Covenanters was vindicated in a most

striking manner and from an unexpected quarter. Uncompromising and fearless abolitionists in their determined opposition to slavery, were logically led to see that the written Constitution of the United States was an immoral compact, inasmuch as it provided for the return of fugitive slaves, and inasmuch as the Dred-Scott decision of the supreme court of the nation was undeniably constitutional. These honest and consistent anti-slavery men, headed by Wendell Phillips and Wm. Lloyd Garrison, denounced the immorality of the Constitution, practically dissented from it as an unjust compact, and refused to incorporate by the exercise of the franchise or any other political act with the government of our country. This was coming to the identical position held by Covenanters since the adoption of the Constitution. But Covenanters had regard to the rights of God and his Christ as well as to the rights of their oppressed fellow men. They saw from the first that disregard of human rights grew out of disregard of divine rights. And hence when the anti-slavery amendment to the Constitution followed the scourge and discipline of the war of the rebellion, they still held fast to their position of dissent and non-incorporation because due honor was not yet given to Christ as King, nor to his supreme law for national conduct.

#### PRESENT DUTY.

And here, brethren, we stand to-day. On this high ground we stand as an organized body, in covenant relation with our God and Saviour King. Let individuals drift away, as they may, the church holds steadfastly to this position. And her efficiency, yes, her very life, depends on the faithful maintenance of it. Should present commotions within her drive her from these moorings she would no longer be the Covenanter church of America. She would be false to her most solemn engagements. She would be unworthy of her martyr sires and her glorious history. But we do not fear the issue of these commotions. Weakened we may be in numbers, but we shall come forth from the furnace with purer and stronger faith. Material resources may be decreased, but we shall lay hold with firmer grasp upon the resources of omnipotence. We may have to pass through fire and flood, but our God will bring us out, in his own good time, to a wealthy place. Men may to-day ride over our heads, but victory is sure under the banner of our Covenant and the leadership of our Crowned King.