

# The Covenant

*Sworn and Subscribed by the Synod of  
The Reformed Presbyterian Church  
of North America*

*at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, May 21, 1871*

*and by  
the several congregations*

Believing assuredly that in covenanting with God, and thereby binding our souls by oath to fear and serve Him, we do make a near approach into His august and holy presence, and knowing that they only are approved and accepted who come with self-abasement, filled with shame and godly sorrow, and ingenuously confessing and forsaking their sins, according to that word, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” [1 John 1:9], we do now give glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession unto Him.

We do humbly and sincerely confess and lament that we have not duly valued and improved the unsearchable riches of truth and grace in the Holy Scriptures, by making them our constant, earnest and prayerful study, by accepting Christ in all His fulness of saving blessings, and by seeking for the Holy Spirit in His illuminating and renewing grace to apply to our souls the redemption of Christ, and thus reconcile us unto God, and make us partakers of everlasting life.

We acknowledge, with shame, want of faith in God and in the promises and threatenings of His Word, formality in religious services, pride, selfishness, vanity, conformity to the spirit of the world, lukewarmness, untenderness in our walk and in our dealings with others, unwatchfulness, sinful security, and want of spirituality in our disposition and deportment. We are chargeable with remissness in the duties of the closet, the family, the prayer-meeting, and the sanctuary. We have not hallowed the Sabbath by observing it with the care and

sacredness required by the divine Commandment. We have shown criminal apathy and unfaithfulness in that we have not cherished love for all men, and especially for the faithful in Christ Jesus, and in that we have not exhorted one another daily, and sought to promote the spiritual growth and holiness of the saints.

We mourn that religion has not been cultivated and practiced in our homes as it should have been. Parents have not felt in any adequate measure their responsibility for the salvation of their children; and in consequence, family worship, reading the Scriptures in the household, instruction in the accepted manuals of the faith of the Church, and pleading the covenant and promise of God on behalf of our seed, are mournfully neglected.

We lament that, as professing witnesses for Christ, we have failed in obedience to His command to preach the Gospel to every creature, to make known His will and law among the nations, and to administer with fidelity the law and discipline of His own house. While property is hoarded up, or wasted upon the luxuries and vanities of life, and in very many cases upon objects pernicious to both body and soul, means are wanting to make known the way of salvation in the sight of the heathen. We confess and bewail our forgetfulness of the obligations laid upon us by the Covenants of our fathers, in that we have often walked contrary thereunto, in not testifying fully and clearly in word and act for the claims of Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church, and the Prince of the kings of the earth. We have sinned, too, in that, while witnessing for social covenanting as an ordinance of God, binding under the dispensation of the Gospel, we have not as a Church in this country, by our own act, performed the duty.

We humble ourselves in the sight of the Just and Holy One, in view of the many and great iniquities of the land in which we live. The nation refuses to own its responsibility to God and to the Mediator, to recognize the supremacy of the Bible in national affairs, and to countenance and encourage the true Christian religion. Atheists, infidels, and all classes of vile men, are made constitutionally eligible to the most responsible positions under the government. Consonant with these essential effects, the history of the government has been largely one of oppression and injustice towards its aboriginal and colored people, and of iniquitous distinction of caste; while Sabbath desecration, prostitution of the oath, official corruption and dishonesty, profanation of the name of God, murder, drunkenness, excess and rioting, violation of the ordinance of marriage, vanity of apparel, sinful extravagance, lying and deceit, are become common and ordinary sins. These, and all other transgressions whereof our people and land are guilty, we desire to acknowledge, and to be humbled on account of them, that all men may see that righteousness belongeth unto God, and shame and confusion of face unto us, as appears this day.

And because the promise of mercy is made to those who not only confess, but forsake their sin, we do resolve and engage before the Lord carefully

to avoid, for the time to come, all these offences, together with temptations leading thereunto; and to testify the integrity of our hearts in this resolution and engagement, and that we may be the better enabled in the power of the Lord's strength to perform the same, we, in obedience to the command of God, conformably to the practice of the godly in former times and recognizing all that is moral in the Covenants of our worthy religious progenitors of the Second Reformation, do hereby give ourselves in covenant to God, to His Church, and to one another.

### **Covenant**

We, Ministers, Elders, Deacons, and Members of the REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA, with our hands lifted up, do jointly and severally swear by the Great and Dreadful Name of the Lord our God:

1. That coming into the presence of the Lord God with a deep conviction of His awful majesty and glory, of His omniscience, His purity, His justice and His grace; of our guilt and total depravity by nature, and our utter inability to save ourselves from deserved condemnation to everlasting punishment; with renunciation of all dependence on our own righteousness as the ground of pardon and acceptance with God, we receive for ourselves and for our children the Lord Jesus Christ as He is offered in the Gospel to be our Saviour—The Holy Spirit to be our Enlightener, Sanctifier and Guide—and God, the Father, to be our everlasting portion; we approve and accept of the Covenant of Grace as all our salvation and desire, and take the moral law as dispensed by the Mediator, Christ, to be the rule of our life, and to be obeyed by us in all its precepts and prohibitions.

Aiming to live for the glory of God as our chief end, we will, in reliance upon God's grace, and feeling our inability to perform any spiritual duty in our own strength, diligently attend to searching the Scriptures, religious conversation, the duties of the closet, the household, the fellowship-meeting and the sanctuary, and will seek in them to worship God in spirit and in truth. We do solemnly promise to depart from all iniquity, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, commending and encouraging, by our example, temperance, charity and godliness.

2. That after careful examination, having embraced the system of faith, order and worship revealed in the Holy Scriptures, and summarized, as to doctrine, in the *Westminster Confession and Catechisms*, and *Reformed Presbyterian Testimony*, and, as to order and worship, justly set forth in substance and outline in the *Westminster Form of Church Government* and *Directory for Worship*, we do publicly profess and own this as the true Christian faith and religion, and the system of order and worship appointed by Christ for His own house, and,

by the grace of God, we will sincerely and constantly endeavor to understand it more fully, to hold and observe it in its integrity, and to transmit the knowledge of the same to posterity. We solemnly reject whatever is known by us to be contrary to the Word of God, our recognized and approved manuals of faith and order, and the great principles of the Protestant Reformation. Particularly, we abjure and condemn Infidelity, under all its various aspects; Atheism, or the denial of the divine existence; Pantheism with its denial of the divine personality; Naturalism, with its denial of the divine Providential Government; Spiritualism, with its denial of the Bible redemption; Indifferentism, with its denial of man's responsibility; Formalism, with its denial of the power of godliness. We abjure and condemn Popery, with its arrogant assumption of supremacy and infallibility; its corrupt and heretical teachings; its dogma of the Immaculate Conception; its hostility to civil and religious liberty, to the progress of society in civilization and intelligence, and especially its denial, in common with Infidelity, of the right and duty of the State to educate in morality and religion by the use of the Bible in schools enjoying its patronage and support.

Believing Presbyterianism to be the only divinely instituted form of government in the Christian Church, we disown and reject all others forms of ecclesiastical polity, as without authority of Scripture, and as damaging to purity, peace and unity in the household of faith.

We reject all systems of false religion and will-worship, and with these all forms of secret oath-bound societies and orders, as ensnaring in their nature, pernicious in their tendency, and perilous to the liberties of both Church and State; and pledge ourselves to pray and labor according to our power, that whatever is contrary to godliness may be removed, and the Church beautified with universal conformity to the law and will of her Divine Head and Lord.

3. Persuaded that God is the source of all legitimate power; that He has instituted civil government for His own glory and the good of man; that He has appointed His Son, the Mediator, to headship over the nations; and that the Bible is the supreme law and rule in national as in all other things, we will maintain the responsibility of nations to God, the rightful dominion of Jesus Christ over the commonwealth, and the obligation of nations to legislate in conformity with the written Word. We take ourselves sacredly bound to regulate all our civil relations, attachments, professions and deportment, by our allegiance and loyalty to the Lord, our King, Lawgiver and Judge; and by this, our oath, we are pledged to promote the interests of public order and justice, to support cheerfully whatever is for the good of the commonwealth in which we dwell, and to pursue this object in all things not forbidden by the law of God, or inconsistent with public dissent from an unscriptural and immoral civil power.

We will pray and labor for the peace and welfare of our country, and for its reformation by a constitutional recognition of God as the source of all power, of Jesus Christ as the Ruler of Nations, of the Holy Scriptures as the

supreme rule, and of the true Christian religion; and we will continue to refuse to incorporate by any act, with the political body, until this blessed reformation has been secured.

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

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

6. Committing ourselves with all our interests to the keeping of Him in whom we have believed; in faithfulness to our own vows, and to the Covenants of our fathers, and to our children whom we desire to lead in the right ways of the Lord; in love to all mankind, especially the household of faith; in obedience to the commandment of the everlasting God to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, we will bear true testimony in word and in deed for every known part of divine truth, and for all the ordinances appointed by Christ in His kingdom; and we will tenderly and charitably, but plainly and decidedly, oppose and discountenance all and every known error, immorality, neglect or perversion of divine institutions. Taking as our example the faithful in all ages, and, most of all, the blessed Master Himself, and with

our eye fixed upon the great cloud of witnesses who have sealed with their blood the testimony which they held, we will strive to hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering, in hope of the crown of life which fadeth not away.

Finally, we enter upon this solemn act of covenanting before the Omniscient God, with unfeigned purpose of paying our vow. All sinister and selfish ends and motives we solemnly disavow, and protest that we have no aim but the glory of God, and the present and everlasting welfare of immortal souls. And our prayer to God is and shall be to strengthen us by His Holy Spirit to keep this our promise, vow and oath, and to bless our humble attempt to glorify His name and honor His truth and cause with such success as will bring salvation to our own souls, the wider spread and triumph of truth and holiness, and the enlargement and establishment of the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, to whom, with the Father and the Spirit, one God, be glory in the Church throughout all ages, world without end. AMEN.