

# The Principles of the Second Reformation

A Lecture by the Rev. Andrew Symington DD., Paisley, 1841.

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SECOND REFORMATION - FACTS - PRINCIPLES - OVERTHROW - REVOLUTION - RISE OF REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH - ADHERENCE TO THE SECOND REFORMATION - ITS IMPORTANT BEARINGS - REASON AND OBJECTS OF THIS SERIES OF LECTURES.

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What are the principles to which so much importance is attached? Is a question meeting us as we introduce the proposed course of Lectures. In giving a reply to this most reasonable demand, reference must, of course, be made to the history of the memorable period with which the principles in question are associated - the principles of the *Second Reformation*. But in answering this question, I am not to be expected to give lengthened historical illustrations, nor am I to adduce a body of statutory proofs, nor am I to take up the scriptural argument in support and defence of the principles in question. Besides the impossibility of comprehending all this in a single lecture, I should, were I to attempt it, necessarily anticipate the tasks assigned to the brethren that are to succeed me. My duty at present, if I do not mistake it, is to make some brief preliminary observations, preparing the way for the discussions announced in the syllabus, by placing before the mind the principles that are to be advocated, and endeavouring to awaken interest and attention by impressing the mind with a sense of their importance. To this task, then, I immediately address myself.

The Second Reformation forms, a brief, but crowded and lucid, chapter in the history of our country, and of the church of God in it, a chapter in which every British Christian should be well read. The period commencing in 1638, and continuing for the ten years which follow, has been usually known, in the ecclesiastical history of this country, by the designation of the Second Reformation, to distinguish it from a period

of longer duration in the preceding century, usually called from its priority, not its excellence, the First Reformation. The First was a reformation from Popery; that of which we are now to speak is a reformation from Prelacy, and was distinguished, not only by retrieving what was lost, when in 1592 and subsequent years, the first reformation was departed from, but distinguished also by a great accession of important attainment. It is worthy of remark here, that the Second Reformation, within that last ten years, has been brought into more conspicuous and honourable notice, than for the preceding century and half. The historic page has been searched and thrown open, and the knowledge of the period in question is no longer confined to the antiquary, the curious historian, or to a few persons taking a christian interest in the religious doings of that period; it has been raised from the obscurity in which it lay, and vindicated from much of that reproach which was cast upon it, where it was at all mentioned; and its great actors, and their noble Christian actions, have been held up to respect and admiration. Its attainments, after they were abandoned and lost, lingered long in the recollections and hearts of the religious people of Scotland, but had sunk into comparative oblivion when recent discussion called them to view; and the modern advocates of ecclesiastical reformation strengthen their arguments and pleadings, by appeal to its men, its principles, and its martyrs. Would to God that we could regard this as a token that an epoch draws near, when there will be a

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return to the faithful and extended application of its noble principles! “Turn thou us unto thee, O God, and we shall be turned: renew our days as of old.”

To state the great principles of the Second Reformation, it will be necessary to recur to prominent facts in the history of the period. ‘In a period of conflicting opinions and sentiments, producing mental and moral revolutions, it seldom happens that individuals or communities arrive all at once at the great principles which are afterwards recognized and felt.’ We are not to expect to find a system of principles, laid down and adopted by the leaders of the Reformation, and then acted upon; but turning our attention to facts, and observing the great movements as they have proceeded, we shall be able to elicit the great principles which impelled the actors, whose doings have so large demands on our gratitude, and supply so valuable lessons for our adoption and imitation.

I. Applying this principle to the task assigned me, I shall simply state a few facts which shall furnish data from which to elicit the principles of the Second Reformation.

A first place is here due to the renovation of the National Covenant of Scotland in the year 1638, in its application to Prelacy. From the year 1592, the First Reformation declined. The monarch of that day assumed his haughty and usurped prerogative of supremacy in all things; the liberty of the Church was invaded; her assemblies were interdicted; and preparation was being made for imposing prelacy upon the Church by dint of royal authority. After unsuccessful remonstrance, and repeated invasions of their privileges, the religious people of Scotland, apprehensive of their danger, proceeded with great unanimity and zeal to renew the National Covenant, in condemnation of Prelacy. This valuable document had been drawn up nearly sixty years before this time, to unite the country against Popery; but the reformers of this period perceived such an affinity, if not identity, between Prelacy and Popery, that they regarded the abjuration of the one as

virtually adjuring the other, adding to the ancient deed paragraphs declaratory of their views. This seasonable and magnanimous step served a valuable purpose in uniting the people; and as it took a lead, so it prepared the way for still greater decision and boldness.

Another prominent fact, to aid us in our present inquiry, is the calling and meeting of the General Assembly in Glasgow, at the close of the same memorable year; an assembly distinguished above all others by the fidelity and magnanimity of its proceedings. In opposition to the royal pleasure, in despite of the dissolution of the assembly by the royal commissioner, and his proclamation interdicting it under certification, the assembly, claiming an intrinsic power from the Lord Jesus Christ, continued its sessions, and proceeded with its business, annulling preceding unlawful Assemblies, deposing Bishops, condemning the articles of Perth, Service Book, Book of Canons, Book of Ordination, and other instruments by which it was attempted to impose prelacy upon the church; and these measures were gone into in a style which monarchs and prelates were not accustomed, and which is perhaps yet scarcely forgiven and forgotten. The restoration of Presbyterian government, the erection of Presbyteries, the vindication of the order and rights of the ruling elder, the Presbyterian inspection of ministers, the prohibition of intrusion upon congregations, the planting of schools, the visiting of the universities, the protection of the Sabbath, and other things found in the acts of this assembly, show it to have been composed of men of pious principle, of comprehensive views, of magnanimous purpose, of untiring activity, and of uncompromising fidelity, proceeding in a line of scriptural reform, under a special and mighty impulse from above; and they furnish ample material from which to form distinct views of the high and lofty aim and principles of the Second Reformation.

In the third place, I shall refer for evidence on the subject before us, to the Solemn League and Covenant, and to the

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Westminster standards. In the former of these, our Scottish fathers had an originating and immediate hand, and in the preparation of the latter, though conducted in England, the Scottish representatives had an eminent place. England, in the days of her troubles, casting her eye to Scotland, could not procure her aid and co-operation, excepting by stipulations securing the interest of the reformed religion. Accordingly, with this view, the Solemn League and Covenant was prepared, stipulating for the preservation of the reformed religion in the Church of Scotland, and reformation of religion in England and Ireland. This instrument declares against Popery and Prelacy, combines the defence of religion and liberty with allegiance to the Sovereign, and wisely provides against immediately impending dangers. In the spirit of true patriotism, our fathers engage, in this instrument, to promote the union of the kingdoms, they sympathise with other churches groaning under the yoke of antichristian tyranny, and, with expanded benevolence, direct their regards abroad for the enlargement of the kingdom of Christ, and the peace and tranquillity of Christian kingdoms and common-wealths. Whatever doubts may rest on the spirit and views of some persons in England, there can be but one sentiment on the sincere cordiality of Scotland. This document furnishes evidence of the christian, enlightened, patriotic, and sublimely enlarged views of the men of these times.

And next to it we must place the Westminster Standards, as received by the Church of Scotland, with distinct declaration of her views on the intrinsic authority of the church, and on her form of ecclesiastical polity. These documents are distinguished by the purity of their style, the soundness of their evangelical doctrine, and the comprehensiveness of the views. They were prepared with much prayer and labour, and remain monuments of the piety and talent, erudition and industry, fidelity and zeal of the reformers of that day, as they are the legitimate evidence of their principles.

In addition to these sources of evidence, it were natural to adduce the Acts of Assemblies and of Parliament during this period, as proofs and illustrations of the principles upon which the reformation proceeded; but, upon these our limits forbid us to enter.

**II.** Furnished with such data, let us now proceed to our task, in reply to the question, What are the principles of the Second Reformation? From this reformation being specially directed against Prelacy, it related chiefly to matters connected with the institutions and polity of the church, and to political affairs, in connection with religion, and the interests of the church. We are not to think, from this circumstance, that it overlooked the precious doctrines of the gospel, and the interests of personal godliness. In the documents alluded to, we have evidence of a sound theology, ably supported from the Holy Scriptures, and pointedly directed against Papal and Arminian errors; and, the lives of the men engaged in this reformation, give evidence that the doctrines of the cross were the living spirit that animated them in all their endeavours to secure to the church her liberty, and to bring her to conformity to the will of her Lord. What, then, are the principles which the men of the Second Reformation have transmitted as a precious inheritance to their children.

1. *The Universal Supremacy of the Lord Jesus Christ* must take the lead here. He is given to be the head over all things to the church. The church is Christ's. He has loved her, redeemed her, chartered her, and given her a constitution, immunities, and laws, and officers. "There is no other head of the church but the Lord Jesus Christ, nor can the Pope of Rome, in any sense, be the head thereof; but is himself antichrist, that man of sin and son of perdition, that exalteth himself in the church against Christ, and all that is call God." The reformers saw this truth against claims asserted and exercised in opposition to it. In the preface to the *Propositions concerning Church Government*

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*and Ordination*, this truth is brought to view in a series of appropriate quotations from the scriptures. In these passages the universal supremacy of the Lord Jesus Christ stands connected with his headship over the church. He is given to be head over all things to the church. While the attention of the reformers was very particularly directed to the headship of the Redeemer over the church, it was the spirit and aim of their whole procedure to bring the nation, as well as the church, into subjection to Christ. In their solemn covenant, they confessed "these kingdoms are guilty of many sins against God and Christ." They were reverentially awed with the necessary moral supremacy of Jehovah; they regarded this as now taking effect, by appointment of him who has "given all judgment to the Son," in the supremacy of Jesus Christ; and they viewed this universal supremacy as essentially connected with his headship over the church. The headship, the exclusive headship of Jesus over his church, was the grand and leading principle of the Second Reformation, into which all its other principles may be resolved.

2. Another leading principle of this Reformation, is the *spiritual independence of the church of Christ*. "The Lord Jesus, as king and head of the church, hath therein appointed a government in the hand of church officers, distinct from the civil magistrate. To these officers the keys of the kingdom of heaven are committed." The church receives the doctrines of her faith, the institutions of her worship, her polity, and her discipline from Jesus Christ, independently of all foreign authority. The fathers of the Second Reformation boldly claimed and exercised this independence in the meeting of the famous assembly at Glasgow, and they established it in their enactments concerning calls, ordinations, and censures. The reformers did not plead for the irresponsibility of the members of the church to lawful civil authority, nor give to the church a power over the nation. The documents to which we have appealed for her principles, settle this point, and profess and enjoin respect and subjection to lawful

civil authority. But the reformers of that time contended that the church had from Christ a right within herself to determine all matters within her province, and to give them full ecclesiastical effect, independently of magistratical authority. The Second Reformation was thoroughly anti-erastian.

3. The *supreme and ultimate authority of the word of God in the church*, is another of the principles of the Second Reformation. This grand protestant principle was universally acted upon, in opposition unto the claims of the See of Rome, and of kings usurping the authority claimed by that See. The church has authority from Christ for edification, but it is not autocratic and supreme. Obedience is due to the church only in the Lord, and is obligatory upon the conscience only in the case of power lawfully possessed, and exercised in agreeableness to the word of God. The church of Rome claims to be the infallible interpreter of the Scripture, and demands implicit obedience to her authority. The church of Christ addresses herself to the understanding and conscience according to the word of God. The reason of obedience to her, is the authority of God in the word. Princes, acting in the spirit of Rome, require implicit or passive obedience to their authority; but the reformation gave to men the right of using their judgment, and proving all things. "The supreme judge by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men and private spirits, are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the Holy Spirit speaking in the scripture." There is nothing more prominent in the whole procedure of the men of the Second Reformation, than the application of this principle. In their renovation of the National Covenant, they condemn the innovations and evils of Prelacy, as having no warrant in the word of God; and they oppose the claim asserted by Popery and Prelacy to ordain rites, declaring that "God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men, which are in any thing contrary to his word, or beside it in

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matters of faith and worship. So that to believe such doctrines, or to obey such commandments out of conscience, is to betray true liberty of conscience; and the requiring an implicit faith and an absolute and blind obedience, is to destroy liberty of conscience and reason also.” The men of the Second Reformation brought every matter of faith, worship, discipline, and government, to the test of the divine word, applying this measuring reed to the temple, the altar, and them that worship therein. They paid a supreme regard to “the law and testimony,” in their faith, and worship, and church polity. Not the traditions of men, not the authority of Pope, Prelate, or Prince, not supposed agreeableness to reason and the fitness of things, not venerable antiquity, not fascinating novelty, not present expediency, not even the authority of the church, but the revealed will of Christ, is the immediate, authoritative, and ultimate reason of the church’s faith and ordinances. This principle is vital in faith, and essential in the church of Christ; and in proportion as Christians and churches act upon it, do they glorify the Redeemer.

The reformers, in contending for presbyterianism, appealed for its great and leading principles to the Word of God, and the practice of the apostolic and primitive church; thus investing it with the authority of a Divine Institute, and respecting and reverencing it as such. The appeal to the word of God is a more facile and satisfactory method of settling ecclesiastical questions, than references to the inextricable mazes of ambiguous and disputable acts of remote antiquity.

4. Another principle of the Second Reformation is, the *subjection of nations to God and to Christ*. The reformers regarded magistracy as the moral ordinance of God. “God, the supreme Lord and King of all the world, hath ordained civil magistrates to be under him over the people, for his own glory and the public good.” They regarded civil government, not as the suggestion of expediency, or an invention of men, like the arts of civilised life, but as the moral ordinance of God, to be erected and

administered upon the principles of the moral law; and, in agreeableness to this, the reformers regarded the moral and religious character of rulers, and deferred to the Divine Word, in their legislative and judicial procedure. But, besides this, they acted upon the principle of the subjection of civil rulers to Jesus Christ; not that they viewed civil government as originating in the dispensation of grace, but as placed, with other moral ordinances, under the feet of Christ. Their principles in this matter will appear from the federal deeds to which I have referred. In the renovation of the national covenant, they pledge their allegiance to the king, for defending the true religion, as it was then reformed, and is expressed in the Confession of Faith; and in the Solemn League and Covenant, they tender their allegiance to the king in the *preservation and defence of the true religion and liberties of the kingdom*. They proceeded upon the principle of magistratical subjection to Jesus Christ. They pled for the independence of the church against the Erastian doctrine, and they held the independence of the state against the claims of Popery. The men of these times were distinguished by sagacity; they were fruitful in resources, and beset with great difficulties, which often quicken invention; but they appear never to have thought of an entire disjunction of church and state. Had they thought of this, and made the attempt, they would have found it difficult, if not impracticable altogether; and if they had succeeded, they would soon have found that the measure gave security of independence to neither the church nor the state. But the men of these days sought an alliance between the two, based upon broad moral religious grounds, acknowledged by both, and defining the power and objects of both in such a way that each had its own independent jurisdiction, while both co-operated in their respective provinces, in furthering the great public object of the reformation. Accordingly, the National Covenant, the Solemn League and Covenant, and the Westminster Confession, to which we have referred for the principles

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of the Second Reformation, were ratified by the state, after being adopted by the church. Such is the fact of the case, establishing that it was a fixed principle of that period, that civil society should acknowledge Divine Revelation, bow at the footstool of Jesus' throne, and erect its constitution, enact its laws, and conduct its administration in subserviency to the interests of the kingdom of Christ.

5. The *duty of covenanting with God, and the obligation of religious covenants*, pertained to the principles of the Second Reformation. This duty was resorted to at that time, and found to be eminently useful. In the early dawn of reformation from Popery, recourse was had to this exercise; and it was blessed as a means of impressing obligation upon the conscience, distinguishing the friend of truth, and uniting them to one another, emboldening them in the profession of religion, and throwing a protection around their common privileges. They learned this, not only from the example of the churches abroad that were in a state of separation from Rome, but from approved examples in the Scriptures. The Second Reformation commenced with a renovation of the National Covenant in its application to Prelacy, and it was further matured in its grand design by the Solemn League. This was resorted to as a divinely warranted means of uniting the friends of the Reformation in the bonds of truth, and of uniting the church and the kingdom in the conjunct prosecution of the Reformation.

6. The reformers of those days acted upon the principle of *holding fast past attainments, advancing in reformation, and extending its blessings to others*. They appreciated the privileges which were transmitted to them from their fathers, and, when threatened with deprivation of them, they stood forth in their defence, and held fast what they had. Not did they stand still, as though they were already perfect. They mediated and planned the union of the kingdom in one happy uniformity and peace; and casting their eye abroad, they contemplated the enlargement of the kingdom of the Saviour. They were

animated with a spirit of enlarged love to God, and benevolence to men upon religious principles.

Such are some of the leading principles which directed the views, and animated the actings, of the fathers of the Second Reformation. Providence raised and brought into the field at that time, a race of men distinguished alike by high intellectual, moral, and religious qualifications, who stood forth in defence of religion and liberty in perilous days, the friends of the church of God, and of their country's best interests. The prayerful labours of the ministry in their studies, and their faithfulness and zeal in the pulpit, and their sagacity, argument, and eloquence in the assembly, and their writings, were all devoted to one great object. The production of their pens are monuments to this day of their unexampled industry, and extensive biblical learning, as well as sound and elevated principles. Their holy lives gave witness to their piety. They were honoured of Heaven in the success that attended their labours. Religion was in these days felt in the hearts of multitudes, it was cultivated diligently in the closet and the family, and it shone in the life. These years, thought few, were years of the right hand of the Most High. An impulse was communicated to the generation, which was not dissipated in the confusions and agitations which soon, alas! soon, ensued; nor was it crushed in the barbarous persecutions which followed; but in spite of the one and the other, it wrought for an ungrateful posterity the liberties they continue to enjoy. The infidel and sceptic, the profane and the profligate, the admirers of feudalism and tyranny, may look askance at the honourable mention of this period, but the impartial and faithful pen must record it as the brightest chapter in Scotland's story; presenting to the philosophic student wonderful developments of mind; exhibiting to the politician instructive and impressive lessons; holding forth to the patriot the most commanding examples of wisdom, and fortitude, and patience, and perseverance, in rescuing a country from oppression, and

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restoring and establishing its liberties. But above all these, to the Christian, to the lover of the Saviour and his church, this period is pregnant with instruction and with promise, the brightest day of Scotland's church, a day in which millennial glory seems to dawn. A church, holding directly of her Head in heaven, with doctrines, and institutions, and polity, based immediately on the Holy Scriptures; with standards so excellent; with ministers so pious and faithful; with a people so enlightened and devoted; allied to a Christian reformed state, without any encroachment upon its independence, or compromise of her own; with school for scriptural education, and seats of learning consecrated by sound religion; and banded together in a holy covenant; and standing fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made her free; and resolutely prosecuting her proper purposes, presents an object commanding admiration. This is the Church of Scotland with which we aspire to the honour of being identified, to which we look back with gratitude and with regrets, remembering from whence we are fallen. Alas, that its prosperous day should be so short, and that while we cast an eye of wonder and delight upon it, clouds and darkness should so soon overshadow it!

**III.** It is a remarkable fact, that the church of God, since its first erection in Eden, has never had a very lengthened period of prosperity. How often do we find her falling from her first love, and brought nigh to the point of utter extinction, when God has interposed, declaring that his church is an interest which he will not suffer to decay, or to be destroyed. The Second Reformation had scarcely laid down its principles, matured its plans, and commenced its operations, when it was arrested in its noble course. Deviations from its wise provisions were introduced, and a variety of causes began insidiously to operate, which issued in its entire subversion, at the restoration of the perfidious Charles. The renovation of the National Covenant, the doings of the Assembly at Glasgow, and the Solemn

League, were condemned as unlawful and treasonable, and every principle of the Second Reformation violated. The king was vested with that Supremacy which had so long been the bane of the church's prosperity; this told immediately in the subversion of the church's independence, in the abolition of Presbytery, and the restoration of Prelacy and Patronage. The authority of the Word of God was set at nought; the nation cast off her obligations to God and his Christ; the public covenants were treated with ignominy and profane contempt; and a barbarous persecution was raised to suppress and extinguish every vestige of the reformation, and many sealed with their blood their testimony to its great principles. Thus was the goodly fabric laid in ruin. But we will not despair, "Thou shalt arise and have mercy upon Zion: for the time to favour her, yea, the set time is come. For thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favour the dust thereof."

**IV.** The persecution raged for a long period of years, and made havoc of the church of God. He who rules in the raging sea said, "Here shall thy proud waves be stayed." It rolled itself to rest in the memorable Revolution. While much of the divine goodness, in behalf of the church and the nation, is to be seen in this event, it is to be deplored that the desolations of Zion were not rebuilt on their ancient foundations. In the views of not a few of the men of that day, the principles of the Second Reformation were not faithfully dealt by, at this interesting juncture; although a long period of alarm and persecution disposed the men of that time to embrace deliverance on easier terms, than they would have submitted to in other circumstances. A small minority could not acquiesce in the Revolution, and remained in a state of dissent; refusing to incorporate with the church or with the state, declining the fellowship of the one, and protesting against the other. For a short time the Rev. Messrs. Lining, and Boyd, and Shields, were connected with these persons. They presented a paper to the General Assembly,

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containing the terms on which they and their people would join in communion with them, craving that they might acknowledge breach of covenant, and purge out the ignorant, and heterodox, and scandalous ministers who had participated in the blood of the saints. But every proposal of this nature was rejected. After unsuccessful efforts to obtain redress, they at last submitted; and the people who had adhered to them were left destitute of a public ministry which they could receive. They formed themselves into Fellowship Societies, gave publicity to their declination, instituted a general correspondence, and continued in this way to edify one another, and to maintain their attachment to the covenanted reformation. The Rev. Mr. M'Millan left the established church, and acceded to them. So early as 1703, Mr. M'Millan, in conjunction with two other ministers of Kirkcudbright, gave in a paper, craving that effectual measures should be taken for reviving the remembrance of the National Covenant and Solemn League and Covenant, and explicitly asserting the Divine right of Presbytery, openly avowing Christ's sole headship over the church, together with her intrinsic liberties, and, for stating impartially, and mourning over, the sins of the land. The two brethren originally associated with him were prevailed upon to withdraw their complaints, and submitted to admonition. This Mr. M'Millan could not do, and he could not be endured. He was libelled, and refusing to comply with the proposal to drop the prosecution of his grievances, he entered his protest, declined the authority of the court, and appealed to the first, free, and faithful Assembly of the Church of Scotland. After the breaking up of the Presbytery, and after a number of the members had gone home, the rest repaired to a neighbouring church, constituted anew, and rashly, and unprecedentedly deposed Mr. M'Millan. His fault was, contending for the whole of the Covenanted Reformation, although put to the account of regularities, and disorderly courses. I tremble when I think of the readiness with which the church has proceeded with such censures. Might

not ministers, entertaining scruples, that could not be said to be altogether groundless, have been allowed to withdraw from communion? But such was not the spirit of the times. Erskine and others, and Gillespie at a future day, received the same treatment; and in times more modern, and by a church whose fathers had received the same treatment, the historian of Knox and Melville, and a few associated with him, were deposed and excommunicated. Mr. M'Millan was prevailed upon to desist from his ministry for a short time, but he never acknowledged the deposition; and when he found that no redress could be had, he resumed his labours with the cordial welcome of his people. He joined the Societies in 1706. Along with Mr. John M'Neill, preacher, he gave a joint Protestation, Declination, and Appeal in 1708. He continued to labour till 1753, declaring on his death-bed his adherence to the Work of Reformation carried on between 1638 and 1649; testifying as an authentic narrative declares, "against all defections from, or opposition to that covenanted cause, or burying it in the rubbish of oblivion, defection, or apostacy, and encroachments on the crown and royal prerogatives of the glorious Head of the church." The Reformed Presbyterian Church was constituted in 1743, and the Testimony for the whole of our Covenanted Reformation, as attained to, and established in Britain and Ireland, particularly betwixt the years 1638 and 1649 inclusive, was published in 1761.

V. Such is the rise of the Reformed Presbyterian Church. The persons first constituting it regarded themselves as a continuation of the Covenanted Church of Scotland; not dissenters from it, but dissenters from what they considered to be defections from it at the Revolution, for they adhered strictly to the principles of the Second Reformation.. It may be proper now to state the reasons upon which they acted, and we may keep our eye upon the principles already specified.



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1. In regard to the Headship of Christ, they considered this doctrine unfaithfully dealt by. The resumption of the supremacy over the church was a thing to be expected from the education and character of William, and it was his manifest drift and policy in all his proceedings. The overlooking, at the Revolution, of all that had been done during the Second Reformation in asserting the sole Supremacy of Christ, was to our fathers ominous. The act 1592, upon which the church was erected at this time, contained no acknowledgement of the Headship of Christ. It was passed only a very few years after one of the Black Acts, engrossing the supremacy, and contains no repeal of this, but invests the monarch with a portion of this supremacy over assemblies. The revival of this act at the revolution, in the view of our fathers, placed the vital question of the sole headship of Christ on a most precarious footing. The fact of the settling of the ecclesiastical supremacy in the crown, for England and Ireland, rendered, in their view, the abolition of it for Scotland a merely nominal political concession of little value; and the more so when they saw this prerogative actually exercised in proroguing and dissolving the assemblies, and sometimes in a very arbitrary manner. And, withal, not only the omission on the part of the church at the Revolution to condemn the Royal Supremacy, and to assert the sole headship of Christ, but the abrupt dissolution of the Assembly, when the draft of an act for the purpose of asserting the Supremacy of Christ was to be submitted, gave occasion for more than suspicion. These things were before their eyes in all the freshness of recent occurrence, and must have made a more vivid impression than when seen back through a vista of a hundred and sixty years.

2. On the subject of the intrinsic authority and independence of the church, the minority referred to demurred, when they reflected - on the manner in which the Assembly had been convened by royal authority, not by her own spontaneous call and appointment - on the way in which the

Confession was enacted, by act of Parliament, without consulting the church - on the omission of the Explanatory Act with which the Assembly of the Second Reformation had received certain portions of the Confession, securing the intrinsic right of the church, and her particular polity - on the very terms of act 1592 - on the dictatorial manner in which the church had been addressed by the king on the subject of the admission of ministers, and administration of her censures - on the omission of any assertion on the part of the church, of her intrinsic power, and of any condemnation of the supremacy - on the persons constitution, in great proportion, the members of the Assembly - and on the doubtful abeyance in which the subject of patronage was left. These circumstances were calculated to excite apprehension, that the headship which was nominally abolished, still exercised an authority, and that the church was not standing in the liberty wherein Christ had made her free.

3. And with regard to the authority of the word of God, they viewed the abolition of Prelacy and establishment of Presbytery in Scotland, as grounded altogether on political expediency to meet the inclination of the people; the phrase occasionally employed, "agreeable to the word of God," being used in a loose sense, as applicable to one form of polity as another. The authority of the law of the great Legislator in Zion was not acknowledged; nor could it with any consistency, when forms not only various, but opposite to one another, received the same sanction of royal authority. And even when the Confession of Faith was read and approved, it was without the Scripture proofs, the proper reason to give it any authority at all; a circumstance indicating the little respect in which the word of God was held in this matter. To persons holding that the word of God is the supreme rule of political and ecclesiastical actings, and who had in their eye a period when regard was paid to the word of God in both, these things must have proved stumbling.

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4. Further, the persons to whom I refer considered the nation, as such, violating its duty to God and his Anointed. It had acknowledged God and Christ, it had embraced the interest of Christ, in solemn engagements; the people had pledged themselves to obey and support authority in the defence of the true religion. Its scriptural constitution and laws were violated; and in this there is to be seen the sin of the people, as well as of the rulers. Knowing all this, and in the full remembrance of the deeds of cruelty and blood which had been lately enacted, was it to be wondered, that they felt chafed in their spirits, and were led to question the nature and extent of their obligation to powers, that, they considered, had so violated the law of God, and of the land?

5. And in regard to the public covenants. Our fathers knew well the place these had held in the preceding Reformation. Finding acts rescinding their obligation unrepealed in the Statute Book; remembering the contempt and profanity with which they had been treated; seeing institutions erected in direct subversion of their letter and spirit; finding a reckless heedlessness on this subject on the part of the government, and a refusal on the part of the church to acknowledge their obligations, or to renew them, they could not consent to their neglect, nor see solemn engagements to God and men, and which had embraced the most valuable interests, thrown to the winds.

6. The minority to whom I refer finding also the grand design of uniting the three kingdoms in one profession of religion entirely frustrated, finding no recognition, even on the part of the Church, of the Second Reformation at all, nor any condemnation of its guilty overthrow; no vestige of it remaining, excepting the Westminster standards, which were only partially recognised, the Catechisms, Propositions for Church Government, and Directory for Worship being altogether omitted; finding no recognition of the Scripture authority of Presbyterian Government; finding Prelacy, against which

the Second Reformation had been particularly directed, set up in two parts of the empire, and connection with it made a condition of holding the throne; finding the liberty of the Church placed in the greatest jeopardy from royal prerogative and public enactments; and finding the covenants violated and set aside, and the blood of the martyrs seemingly unrepented of, they felt it to be their duty to dissent from the Church, and to lift up their solemn protestation against the State. Nor did the subsequent history of the Church produce any thing to remove these scruples, and conciliate their affections. The early restoration of patronage, the violent intrusion of ministers, the spread of error, and other things justified the position they had assumed.

Such were the views of those persons who at the Revolution dissented from the communion of the Scottish Church, and protested against the State. It remains that it be tried whether these things are really so, whether they are facts, and this by statutory and documentary proof. Having ascertained the amount of fact, it will remain to try the principles elicited and acted upon, by the infallible standard of the word of God. This task is committed to other hands, in which, I doubt not, it will be faithfully executed.

And after all this shall be done, another enquiry will follow, Does the amount of *fact* and of *truth* in the circumstances of the case justify the part that was acted? However this matter shall be determined, it will be admitted as a sound principle, applicable in other cases than that of separation from Rome, that “the guilt of schismatical separation belongs, not to those who are compelled by a sense of duty to decline or secede from a communion, but to that communion itself which attaches principles, and superadds requisitions to the system of Christianity, directly subversive of the purity of its doctrines, and the simplicity of its institutions.” It has been justly said, and will be admitted as a general principle, “When the prevailing part of a Church make any addition to, or alteration of the Scripture system of faith, worship, discipline, or

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government, an essential condition of fellowship with them, in this case the prevailing party are the real separatists, and they who are obliged to withdraw from their communion, rather than sin, are the true adherents of the Church, cleaving to her constitutional laws." Schism, an evil of no small magnitude, a reproach often cast upon the few, is not to be tried by arithmetic. It is not a question of numbers, or it were easily settled; but it is a question of truth, and of principle. Let the small minority who clave to the principles of Scotland's covenanted church at the Revolution, only have the benefit of these concessions, and we submit them to be tried accordingly.

This is a question on which those requesting and delivering the proposed Course have decided for themselves. They have not originated dissent, though they have consented or acceded to it; some of them instructed in it from their earliest years, and others acceding to it in more mature life. They are all, however, committed on this question; and, adhering substantially to the dissent of their fathers, they may be permitted to speak for themselves.

**VI.** Let us notice a few of the important connections in which the great principles to be advocated stand.

- Are they not connected intimately with the honour of the Redeemer? He is head over all things. He is King in Zion, and Prince of the Kings of the earth. Let us connect his sufferings with the glory that has followed. He is worthy to receive glory and honour. The hands that were transfixed upon the cross have now received the seven-sealed book, and the sceptre of universal empire. The feet that were nailed to the tree have all things put under them. The head once pierced with the thorny garland is now majestic with the crown of gold. Do we plead for the liberty of the Church? It is the purchase of the precious blood of Christ, and the chartered right of his kingdom, holding immediately of his crown. Do we plead for the authority of the Scriptures? They are the code of our

Lawgiver and Saviour. Do we contend for the subjection of the nations? They are promised as his inheritance, and they shall yet call him blessed. Do we speak of the vows of the church and the nations? They are pledged fealty to our heavenly King. Let him wear the honours he has merited. The headship of Christ is the grand sun of the Second Reformation, irradiating all its parts, and binding them in sacred harmony.

- But those principles are connected essentially with the interests of the church. As the Institute of Christ for the Divine glory and the salvation of men, the church is the highest of all interests on the earth; and it is of importance for the objects for which she is erected that she enjoy the unfettered use of all her institutions, and the exercise of all her liberties. Nothing can be so fitted, or expected to be blessed for her true prosperity, as the institutions her Head has appointed.

- These principles bear upon the best interests of society, and the cause of liberty. They steer a happy medium course between anarchy and despotism, and establish human rights without disturbing the order of society. The noble struggles which have been made for religious liberty, throw light upon the nature of society, and give the surest guarantee for its privileges and prosperity, supplying lessons to the politician, the ruler, and the subject.

- They are intimately connected with the great cause of the Protestant Reformation. This forms the most interesting epoch in the history of Europe, when the human mind awoke from the slumber of ages, when the gospel was preached, the Bible was translated and circulated, when the fabric of Popish superstition and tyranny was shaken, and a mighty change effected in the manners, the literature, the politics and the religion of every country to which the reformation extended. In the reformation, called the Second, the most select and valuable of the principles of the great Reformation referred to, were elicited and applied; and we are thus taught to appreciate their value, and to preserve them in firm retention. And these

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principles will supply a test by which to try our claims to a sound national Protestantism. It becomes a matter of grave inquiry whether a supremacy, which is claimed by him that sitteth in the temple of God, and a hierarchy which the reformers denounced as popish, do not link us to a system that is doomed to be destroyed. The Reformation supplies valuable lessons by which we may learn our sin and our duty, ascertain the causes of divine displeasure with the church and the nation, and know what Israel ought to do in the day of his trouble. "Remember whence thou art fallen, and hold fast, and repent." This is the line of duty, and of true policy.

- The Second Reformation supplies lessons for the times, which might serve to adjust conflicting interests, and conflicting parties. It furnishes an example of a church and a nation in alliance with one another upon the basis of religious truth; and there is no other upon which such an alliance can be lawfully formed. The union of the church with a heathen, an immoral, or an antichristian state, is a thing out of the question. But when a country has been pervaded with religious truth, and is particularly called to put forth its energies in advancing some great reformation for the public good, a well-constructed document, declaring and defining the province and privileges of the respective departments of church and state, and mutually agreed upon, will secure the independence of both, and, by uniting them in combined operation, will greatly promote the interests of both. The reformers knew well the evils of Erastianism, and of Popery; the one making the church a department of the state, and the other making the state the vassal of the church; and they declared against both. They provided for the independence and co-operation of church and state, protecting the church in her spiritual privileges against the encroachments of the state, the evil from which the reformers effected a deliverance; and protecting the civil liberties of the country from the usurpations of the church. They were thus secured from mutual collision, an evil that could not have

been so effectually prevented, while man is man, by church and nation affecting to be in a state of absolute separation. This was no theory; it was brought to the test of experiment, and appeared to be working well, when, in the mysteries of providence, it was stopped short by the recurring ascendancy of a despotic supremacy, from which the reformers had delivered themselves. By a departure from the great principles upon which the reformation was established, the bulwarks which it had erected around our national protestantism and liberty were overthrown.

- And do not these principles suggest the line of duty and of safety, in the present troubles? The sense and confession of sin, humiliation under the mighty hand of God, and speedy and faithful return to that from which we have fallen, hold out our only hope of deliverance from the threatened ascendancy of Popery, that giant evil from which the reformation so happily delivered. "At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it, if that nation against whom I have pronounced turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil I threatened to do unto them. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works."

- By these, and many other important connexions, in which the principles of the reformation stand, it is commended to the faithful adherence of its friends. Here it is to be remarked, however, that it is not the acknowledgement of principles merely in the abstract, for which it is the duty of a church to contend, but for the consistent and faithful application of them. The principles of the headship of Christ, the independence of the church, and of the supreme authority of the word of God, will be readily acknowledged in the abstract, by many who practically violate them. His Holiness of Rome, and the Monarchs of England, could acknowledge the supremacy of Christ, yet shed the blood of those who would deny theirs. The church of Rome, and the Episcopal Church

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claim independence, and profess respect for the scriptures; and yet, in violation of the one and the other, enthral the church and impose upon her the traditions and commandments of men. The Prince of Orange appeared so far to defer to the supremacy of Christ, and the authority of the word of God, when he conceded to Scotland a disclaimer of the supremacy, and the abolition of Prelacy, so far as Scotland is concerned, while he not only retained these in England and Ireland, but pursued a policy, and exercised a summary power in ecclesiastical affairs in Scotland, altogether incompatible with these political concessions. The authority of the word of God may be admitted by a church and yet that authority be virtually set aside, when it is not made the ground of her polity, or when that polity is inconsistent with it. Here, as in the matter of Christian character, it is not by the profession, but by the profession and the practice, that the character is really determined.

We know again, that many in the present day repudiate name and thing, some of the principles upon which the Second Reformation proceeded; such, for example, as the subjection of the nations to the Redeemer, and the duty and obligation of covenants. We are greatly sorry for this, especially on the part of those whose fathers and ecclesiastical symbols once acknowledged these principles. With them the argument must be taken up on the ground of scriptural evidence, and to this we shall appeal.

But there are others in the established church, and these not a few, who will acknowledge the greater part of these principles, if not the whole of them, and who are fain to think that the principles of the period referred to, are still unquestionably the principles upon which she stands. With them we have no debate whatever on abstract scriptural principles. The minority who saw it to be their duty to dissent from the ecclesiastical and civil constitutions at the Revolution, and to whose dissent we have acceded, did so, not

because these principles were doctrinally renounced, but because, in their view, they were practically departed from, violated, and unfaithfully dealt by. As the supremacy of the Redeemer is the grand principle of the Second Reformation, so consent to the regal resumption of this prerogative was the source of all the evils at the Revolution. Our fathers contended for scriptural Presbytery, the independence and intrinsic authority of the church, the covenants, things for which martyrs, because they would be faithful to the crown of the Redeemer, had been put to death by power usurping this supremacy. Is it not a matter of fact that this supremacy was re-enacted, at the Revolution? Is it not a fact that this supremacy, in part of its power at least, is found in the very act claimed as the parliamentary charter of the Revolution Church? And is it not a fact that William interfered in affairs properly ecclesiastical, in a manner altogether inconsistent with the church's independence? These facts were before the eyes of our fathers, and, in a manner altogether inconsistent with the church's independence? They testified against the prerogative granted by the nation to the crown, and the encroachment by it upon the church, and they testified against the church for timidity and unfaithfulness in her submission. They saw the thralldom to which the church was submitting her neck, and the opinions of thousands in the present day, and of some of very high authority, show that they were not altogether mistaken. With what unspeakable advantage would the present arguments for the church's independence be pled, if an appeal could be made to the unequivocal acts of the Second Reformation? It is high time that this question be based upon principles and acts which will not admit of so opposite constructions as those now litigated? Falling back upon the scriptural principles of the Second Reformation, when supremacy over the church had no place in the prerogatives of royalty, and disentangling herself from all connexions with it, the church would stand, and consistently profess to stand, in her liberty.

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It was not connexion with *a* state, nor connexion with *the* state that was the cause of the dissent of our fathers, but connection with a state that had departed from the reformation, and had surrendered the Redeemer's crown to an earthly head, in opposition to the Word of God, the Reformation, the Covenants, and the blood of Argyle, Guthrie, Warriston, and thousands. It was a connexion the state involving a compromise of the church's liberty, and the abandonment of the grand object of the Solemn League in the reformation of England and Ireland. How far it has been justified by subsequent history and by present agitations, we submit to the test of scripture, argument, and historical illustration. The peculiarity of the dissent to which we adhere, distinguishing it from that of others who seceded at a subsequent period, lay in the views which our fathers were constrained to take of the state; for as the ecclesiastical evils originated here, they not only dissented from ecclesiastical deeds and fellowship, but they protested against the state for enacting a constitution and laws, subversive, in their views, of righteousness, and of the reformation: and, becoming aliens to mothers' children, they refused to be incorporated with it. "Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee, which frameth mischief by a law?"

**VII.** It is time I close this lecture, by stating the reasons and object for which the course has been undertaken.

The requisition of friends has been respectfully presented in terms which it would not have been either dutiful or courteous to refuse. Ministers' lips should keep knowledge, and the people seek the law at their mouth.- Inquiries are often made by individuals who see us occupying ground by ourselves, and standing aloof from the two great parties that have been contending so keenly on the arena of public controversy. We have not been rash to obtrude ourselves, and our views, upon public notice. We have lately published an exhibition of our principles, to which we respectfully invite attention on the part of

inquirers. We desire to give to every one that asketh a reason of the hope that is in us, with meekness and fear. We obtrude no novelties. Neither antiquity nor novelty is the criterion of truth; these terms relating merely to the ages and opinions of men. To the Scriptures, and to them alone, we appeal as final authority. Yet we would be followers of the church of God in what is good. "Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the food way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls." - Misrepresentations we know are abroad. It is important that we be known as we really are. The reproaches of singularity, contractedness, illiberality, persecution, disloyalty, utopianism, and I know not how many more, we shall be contented to bear for the truth's sake. We are solicitous that our views, and the grounds of them, should be distinctly known. We speak as to wise men; judge ye what we say. - Nor are we ashamed in undertaking this course, to acknowledge the influence which the example of others may have had upon us. Courses on topics of great interest have been undertaken by others, and in many of these we have much with which we sympathise. The zeal, the ability, the fidelity, and the piety evinced in undertakings of this kind, we appreciate highly, and we bid every laudable effort of this nature, "God speed." Why should we not be followers of the good, and of that which is good? - Our own people and our youth need instruction, excitement, and admonition; and for our immediate friends' and brethren's sake, we feel a special obligation to make known the way of truth more perfectly. - The aspects of the day in which we live urge this duty. A long expected crisis seems now to approach with accelerated speed. "Many shall be purified and made white, and tried: but the wicked shall do wickedly. And none of the wicked shall understand: but the wise shall understand. I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried; they shall call on my name and I will hear them. I will say, It is my people, and

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they shall say, The Lord is my God.” O how much is it to be desired that misunderstandings and alienations were removed, and that the friends of Christ, that are scattered in his judgment, were united in his mercy, to their mutual establishment, and to the dismay of his enemies!

Above all, we desire to cherish a sense of obligation to the Saviour. Sitting enthroned at the right hand of the Majesty on high, he cannot be the object of insult and wrong, as when he was upon the earth, and hanging upon the tree. But he is still, in his truth and his cause, the object of wrongs. He is wronged in the honours of his crown. His prerogatives have been usurped. The sacred territory of his church has been invaded. The oaths of fealty to his crown have been contemptuously violated. The blood of his faithful subjects has been profusely shed. The kings of the earth have made war with the Lamb. Attempts have been made, so far as men can accomplish it, to spoil him of his crown. Should we not take counsel together to restore to him, in the hearts of his children, in his church, and in the world, his violated honours? You remember the language of the tribes of Israel; “The king saved us out of the hand of our enemies, and he delivered us out of the hand of the Philistines, and now he is fled out of the land. Now, therefore, why speak ye not a word of bringing the king back? In present circumstances, the Redeemer may be viewed as rebuking, from his throne on high, our apathy, in the words of David, “Why are ye the last to bring the king back to his house? Ye are my brethren, ye are my bones and my flesh. Wherefore then are ye last to bring back the king?” Let us respond to this touching appeal. Is his covenant made void, is his crown profaned and cast to the ground? Yet there is hope. “Go through, go through the gates, prepare ye the way of the people; cast up the highway, gather out the stones, lift up a standard for the people.” Lift up the Redeemer’s banner, “Cross, Crown, and Covenant.” Inscribe it anew, in the finest gold of Ophir, and wave it high in the sight of his distracted friends, and confederated

enemies. This standard shall yet rally his subjects, and gather multitudes to him from the ends of the earth; it shall distinguish his friends, and unite them; it shall direct their movements; it shall animate their hearts, and intimidate their foes; it shall embolden his faithful followers in the conflict, secure the victory, and wave gloriously in the triumph.

Here, then, are the great objects before us, - to make Jesus King - to bring the King back to his OWN HOUSE - to assert the honours of the Redeemer’s crown, proclaiming his King in Zion, and Lord of all - to vindicate the freedom of his church, and the liberties of his people - to assert the perfection and authority of his word - to claim for him the homage of the nations - to call upon the church and the nations to acknowledge the obligations of their vows, repent of the violation of them, and to renew their once plighted fealty to the Redeemer’s crown - to unite the friends of the Redeemer in truth, and to prosecute the scriptural reformation of all the parts of the united kingdom - to enlarge the Redeemer’s kingdom - to prepare ourselves and other for the hour of temptation that may come to try them that dwell upon the earth - and to direct our hopes and endeavours forward to the days of millennial glory. The honour of the Redeemer’s crown, the independence of his church, the liberty of his people, the coming of his kingdom, form the lofty aims contemplated in maintaining and promoting the principles of the Second Reformation, howsoever feeble and unworthy be the humble instruments.

We sometimes hear from contending parties the call, Come and join us. We stand not still in insipid indifference. Show us greater fidelity to the crown of the Saviour, truths that we have not espoused, honours of the Saviour that we do not vindicate, interests of the Redeemer that we have not embraced, and we hold ourselves bound to respond to your call. We submit the reasons of the part we are acting; we present no challenge, but wait instruction. Show us a more excellent way. We have not made a breach upon the peace and unity of the church, by adhering to her constitution

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and privileges, as asserted in the Second Reformation; we are presently solicitous to hold fast that which is good; and to exhibit, to a distracted world, principles that are fitted to extend the blessings of religion and of liberty, of union and of peace, to our beloved land, and to all the nations of the earth. Fathers that have borne the burden and heat of the day, and traversed the moors and the mountains of the land of the covenants and blood of our ancestors, preaching the Cross and Crown, under the canopy of heaven, and esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, have been called to their rest. We feel the obligation of the example and their testimony. We view the present a time of especial peril, and of difficult duty; a time not to be silent, but a time to speak. “If thou altogether holdest thy peace, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place, but thou and thy fathers’ house shalt be destroyed, and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” The Saviour shall yet be crowned King of Zion, and King of Nations. The church may have protracted conflict and trial. But on mount Zion shall be deliverances as heretofore. Arise, O Lord, plead the cause that is thine own. Remove obstacles out of the way. Pour down thy Holy Spirit. Sanctify in higher degree thy friends, and unite them to one another in truth, and in thy holy cause. And as in the days of old, after years of conflict, Thy providence made all Israel of one heart to make David king, hasten the day, auspicious for our land and for other lands, when the King shall be brought back to his house, and all people, and nations, and languages, shall “be of one heart to make Jesus King.” Amen.