The History of Cedarville College

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Recommended Citation
McDonald, Cleveland, "The History of Cedarville College" (1966). Faculty Books. 65.
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CHAPTER I

THE COVENANTERS

Covenanters in Scotland. --The story of the Reformed Presbyterians who began Cedarville College actually goes back to the Reformation in Scotland where Presbyterianism supplanted Catholicism. Several "covenants" were made during the struggles against Catholicism and the Church of England so that the Scottish Presbyterians became known as the "covenanters." This was particularly true after the great "National Covenant" of 1638. ¹ The Church of Scotland was committed to the great principle "that the Lord Jesus Christ is the sole Head and King of the Church, and hath therein appointed a government distinct from that of the Civil magistrate."² When the English attempted to force the Episcopal form of Church doctrine and government upon the Scottish people, they resisted it for decades. The final ten years of bloody persecution and revolution were terminated by the Revolution Settlement of 1688, and by an act of Parliament in 1690 that established Presbyterianism in Scotland.³ Dr. Thomas Graham summarizes this period of Scottish history in the following lines:

Every American who visits Greyfriars churchyard in Edinburgh will behold the Martyr's Monument and the

¹W. M. Heatherington, History of the Church of Scotland (New York: Robert Carter and Brothers, 1860), p. 158. The "First Covenant" was subscribed to in Perth in 1559, p. 44. After the "National Covenant" came the "Solemn League and Covenant" between Scotland, England and Ireland in 1643, p. 186.

²Ibid., p. 292.

³Ibid., p. 306.
inscription on it saying that 18,000 people of "all classes, young and old, and women alike had died for their faith or had been banished from their native land."

It was an era of conflict, of battle, brutality, torture, death in dungeons, exile and death in ships on the sea. . . . It was a clash between the Covenanters and the Stuart Kings, between Church and State, between Catholics and Protestant, between Episcopacy and Presbyterianism. . . .

Two of the leaders during the rebellion were Richard Cameron and Donald Cargill. They had met at Sanquhar in June, 1680, and renounced their allegiance to Charles II because of his "usurpation in church matters, and tyranny in matters civil." Both these men lost their lives, but "their followers, popularly known as Cameronians, held together and perpetuated their doctrine." These Cameronians refused to accept the Revolution Settlement of 1688 because "the King and Parliament were given such power in the management of ecclesiastical affairs as was inconsistent with the doctrine of Christ's headship." The Covenanters declined to become a part of the National Church, and maintained a separate existence through their praying societies.

Covenanters in Ireland. --Many of these dissatisfied Scotchmen emigrated to Ireland, and "... Ulster became a Scottish colony in the main . . . many of them refugees from Scotland

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4 Thomas Graham, "Covenanters in Ohio," unpublished manuscript to be included in a proposed history of Presbyterians in Ohio, Andrews Library, Wooster College, Wooster, Ohio.


7 Ibid.
during the 'killing time' which followed the Stuart Restoration. However, this did not turn out to be a "Promised Land" as "they were still excluded from office . . . required to have their marriages solemnized by Anglican ministers. . . . This along with breaches of contract on the part of their Irish landlords drove them to America."

Covenanters in America. --These Scottish Presbyterians who came to the Colonies by way of Ireland were known as the Scotch-Irish. Some of the Covenanters settled in the Carolinas and spread through Tennessee and Kentucky. Others were opposed to slavery and continued on to Ohio. Still others landed at Philadelphia, and moved on to other parts of Pennsylvania, Maryland and Virginia. They organized the Reformed Presbytery of America in 1774 which they dissolved during the Revolutionary War for lack of ministers. In 1798 the Presbytery was reconstituted and in 1823 the name was changed to Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in the United States of America. This Synod divided in 1833 over the question of participation in civil government. Those opposing participation in civil government were called the "Old Lights" or "Old Sides," and became the Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in the United States of North America. The others were called "New Lights" or "New Sides," and organized the General Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America. It is this latter Synod, commonly called the "General Synod," that organized Cedarville

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9Ibid.

10Reed, op. cit., p. 325-340. The question of civil government was still being debated 60 years later as occasional articles in the Reformed Presbyterian Advocate defended the "New Light" position. The church in Cedarville began in 1804 and when the Synod divided, the local church also divided, and the community had a "New Light" Church and "Old Light" Church until 1925 when the latter ceased to exist.
College. On April 6, 1965, the "General Synod" merged with the Evangelical Presbyterian Synod, and the combined group is now called "The Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod." 11

11 Personal letter, the Reverend Robert More, Jr., July 9, 1965. The Reverend Robert More states that the Old Light denomination exists with about sixty-eight churches and 6000 members. They still support Geneva College, Beaver Falls, Pa., and a seminary at Pittsburgh, Pa., and "several other institutions and endeavors."