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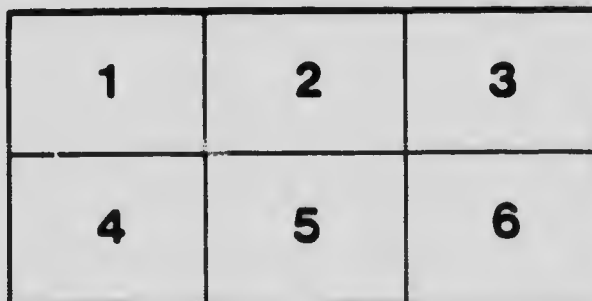
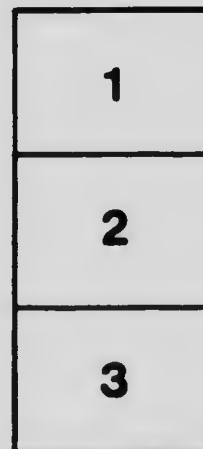
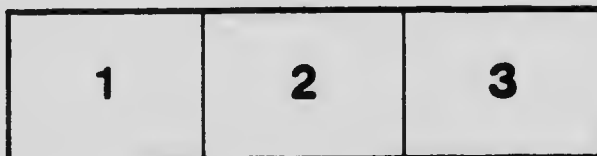
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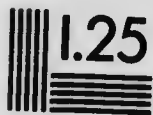
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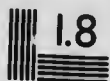
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VII.

THE FORM OF RENEWING THE COVENANT.

[After a short sermon, impressing upon every soul the importance of giving himself to God, and that without delay, each Minister is recommended, on his first tour round his Circuit in the New Year, beginning the first Sabbath in January, to read the following directions, or some of them, in every Congregation, and persuade as many as possible to make solemn Covenant with God, and by divine grace, to keep the Covenant inviolate unto the day of His coming:]

I. Get these three principles fixed in your heart: That things eternal are much more considerable than things temporal; that things not seen are as certain as the things that are seen; that upon your present choice depends your eternal lot. Choose Christ and His ways, and you are blessed for ever; refuse, and you are undone for ever. And then,

II. Make your choice.

Turn either to the right hand or to the left; lay both parts before you, with every link of each; Christ with His yoke, His cross, and His crown; or, the devil with his wealth, his pleasure, and curse; and then put it to yourselves thus: "Soul, thou seest what is before thee, what wilt thou do? Which wilt thou have, either the crown or the curse? If thou chooseth the crown, remember that the day thou takest this, thou must be content to submit to the cross and yoke, the service and the sufferings of Christ, which are linked to it. What sayest thou? Hadst thou rather take the gains and pleasures of sin, and venture on

the curse? Or wilt thou yield thyself to Christ, and so make sure of the crown?"

If your hearts fly off, and would fain waive the business, leave them not so. If you be unresolved, you are resolved. If you remain undetermined for Christ, you are determined for the devil. Therefore, give not off, but follow your hearts from day to day; let them not rest till the matter be brought to an issue; and see that you make a good choice.

This is your choosing the good part, God and the blessedness of the world to come, for your portion and happiness; and in this is included your renouncing the world and worldly happiness.

III. Embark with Christ.

Adventure yourselves with Him; cast yourselves upon His righteousness, as that which shall bring you to God. If you stay where you are, you perish; and escape home of yourself you cannot. Christ offers, if you will venture with Him, He will bring you home, He will bring you to God. Will you now say to Him, "Lord Jesus, wilt Thou undertake for me? Wilt Thou bring me to God, bring me into the Land of Promise? With Thee will I venture myself; I cast myself upon Thee, upon Thy blood, and Thy righteousness; I lay all my hopes, and venture my whole interest, soul and body, with Thee."

IV. Resign and deliver up yourselves to God in Christ.

"Yield yourselves to the Lord," that is, as His servants; give up the dominion and government of yourselves to Christ. "Neither yield your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin; but yield yourselves to God, as

those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God." "To whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey." Yield yourselves so to the Lord, that you may henceforth be the Lord's: "I am thine," saith the Psalmist. Those that yield themselves to sin and the world, their heart says, "Sin, I am thine; world, I am thine;—riches, I am yours; pleasures, I am yours." "I am thine," saith the Psalmist; devoted to Thy fear, dedicated to Thy service. "I am Thine, save me." Give yourselves to Christ, sinners; be devoted to His fear.

And this giving yourself to Him must be such as supposes that you be heartily contented,—

1. That He appoint you your work.
2. That He appoint you your station.

1. That He appoint you your work: That He put you to whatsoever He pleaseth. Servants, as they must do their master's work, so they must do that work which their master appoints them; they must be for any work their master hath for them to do; they must not pick and choose: "This I will do, and that I will not do": they must not say, "This is too hard," or "This is too mean," or "This may be well enough let alone." Good servants, when they have chosen their master, will let their master choose their work, and will not dispute his will, but do it.

Christ hath many services to be done; some are more easy and honorable, others more difficult and disagreeable; some are suitable to our inclinations and interests, others are contrary to both. In some we may please Christ, and please ourselves: as, when He requires us to feed and clothe

ourselves, to provide things honest for our maintenance. Yes, and there are some spiritual duties that are more pleasing than others; as, to rejoice in the Lord, to be blessing and praising God, to be feeding ourselves with the delights and comforts of religion: these are the sweet works of a Christian. But then there are other works, wherein we cannot please Christ but by denying ourselves: as, giving and lending, bearing and forbearing, reproving men for their sins, withdrawing from their company, witnessing against their wickedness, confessing Christ and His name, when it will cause us shame and reproach; sailing against the wind, swimming against the tide, steering contrary to the times, parting with our ease, our liberties, and our accommodations for the name of our Lord Jesus.

[It is desirable that the whole of this Tract be prayerfully pondered in private by those who purpose to enter into the Covenant; but, to shorten the service, the Ministers may here begin to read, on occasion of the annual renewal of the Covenant in the Methodist Societies.]

It is necessary, beloved, to sit down, and consider what it will cost you to be the servants of Christ, and take a thorough survey of the whole business of Christianity, and not to be engaged thoughtlessly to you know not what.

First, see what it is that Christ doth expect, and then yield yourselves to His whole will. Do not think of compounding or making your own terms with Christ: that will never be allowed you.

Go to Christ, and tell Him, "Lord Jesus, if Thou wilt receive me into Thy house, if Thou wilt but own me as Thy

servant, I will not stand upon terms; impose upon me what conditions Thou pleasest, write down Thine own articles, command me what Thou wilt, put me to anything Thou seest good; let me come under Thy roof, let me be Thy servant, and spare not to command me: I will be no longer mine own, but give myself to Thy will in all things."

2. Let Him appoint you your station and condition; whether it be higher or lower, a prosperous or afflicted state. Be content that Christ should choose your work and choose your condition; that He should have the command of you, and the disposal of you: "Make me what Thou wilt, Lord, and set me where Thou wilt: let me be a vessel of silver or gold, or a vessel of wood or stone; so I be a vessel of honor, of whatsoever form or metal, whether higher or lower, finer or coarser, I am content; if I be not the head, or the eye, or the ear, one of the nobler and more honorable instruments Thou wilt employ, let me be the hand, or the foot, one of the most laborious, the lowest, and most contemptible of all the servants of the Lord; let my dwelling be in the dust, my portion in the wilderness, my name and lot amongst the hewers of wood and drawers of water, among the door-keepers of thy house: anywhere, where I may be serviceable. I put myself wholly into Thy hands; put me to what Thou wilt, rank me with whom Thou wilt; put me to doing; put me to suffering; let me be employed for Thee, or laid aside for Thee; exalted for Thee, or trodden under foot for Thee; let me be full, let me be empty; let me have all things, let me have nothing; I freely and heartily resign all to Thy pleasure and disposal."

This is closing with Christ as your King and Sovereign

Lord; and in this is included your renouncing the devil and all his works, the flesh and its lusts; together with your consenting to all the laws and ordinances of Christ and His providential government.

Beloved, such an agreement with Christ as you have here been exhorted to, is that wherein the essence of Christianity lies. When you have chosen the incorruptible crown,—that is, when you have chosen God to be your portion and happiness,—when you have adventured, and laid up your whole interest and all your hopes with Christ, casting yourselves wholly upon the merits of His death; when you have understandingly and heartily resigned yourselves to Him, resolving forever to be at His command, and at His disposal; then you are Christians indeed, and never till then. Christ will be the Saviour of none but His servants. He is the author of eternal salvation to those who obey Him; Christ will have no servants but by consent; His people are a willing people; Christ will accept of no consent but *in full* to all He requires; He will be all in all, or He will be nothing.

◆ Next confirm and complete all this by solemn covenant.

Give yourselves to the Lord as His servants, and bind yourselves to Him as His covenant servants.

Upon your entering into covenant with God, the covenant of God stands firm to you: God gives you leave, every one, to put in his own name into the covenant grant; if it be not found there at last, it will be your own fault; if it be not there, there will be nothing found in the whole covenant belonging unto you; if it be there, all is yours; if you have come into the bond of the covenant, you shall have

your share in the blessings of the covenant. "Thou hast avouched the Lord this day to be thy God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His statutes, and His commandments, and His judgments, to hearken to His voice ; and the Lord hath avouched thee this day to be His peculiar people, as He hath promised thee. (Deut. xxvi. 17, 18.) Observe it: The same day that they avouched the Lord to be their God, the same day the Lord avouched them to be His peculiar people. The same day that they engaged to keep the commandments of God, the same day the Lord engaged to keep His promise with them.

There is a two-fold covenanting with God. In *profession*, or in *reality*; an entering our names, or an engaging our hearts. The former is done in baptism, by all that are baptized, who, by receiving that seal of the covenant, are visibly, or in profession, entered into it. The latter is also two-fold.

1. **VIRTUAL.** Which is done by all those that have sincerely made that closure with God in Christ which we have spoken of. Those that have chosen the Lord, embarked with Christ, resigned, and given themselves to the Lord, have virtually covenanted with Him.

2. **FORMAL.** Which is our binding ourselves to the Lord by solemn vow or promise to stand to our choice. And this may be either inward in the soul, or outward, and expressed either by word, lifting up the hands, subscribing with the hand, or the like ; and by how much the more express and solemn our covenanting with God is, by so much the more sensibly and strongly is it likely to hold our hearts to Him.

Now, that which we would persuade you to, is this solemn and expressed covenanting with God; and in order to the putting this matter into practice, take these few directions:—

1. Seek earnestly His special assistance, and gracious acceptance of you.

2. Consider distinctly all the conditions of the Covenant, as they have been laid before you.

3. Search your hearts, whether you either have already or can now freely make such a closure with God in Christ as you have been exhorted to. Especially consider what your sins are, and examine whether you can resolve to forego them all. Consider what the laws of Christ are, how holy, strict, and spiritual, and whether you can, upon deliberation, make choice of them all (even those that most cross your interests and corrupt inclinations), as the rule of your whole life.

First. Be sure you be clear in these matters; see that you do not lie unto God.

Secondly. Compose your spirits into the most serious frame possible, suitable to a transaction of so high importance.

Thirdly. Lay hold on the covenant of God, and rely upon His promise of giving grace and strength, whereby you may be enabled to perform your promise. Trust not to your own strength, or to the strength of your own resolutions, but take hold on his strength.

Fourthly. Resolve to be faithful. Having engaged your hearts, opened your mouths, and subscribed with your hands to the Lord, resolve in His strength never to go back.

[Here let the Minister request all who are willing to engage in the renewal of the Covenant, to signify it by standing up, after which, in the name of the congregation, he shall open his lips to the Lord, in these words, all devoutly kneeling :]

O most holy and most merciful God! for the passion of Thy Son, we beseech Thee accept of us poor prodigals now prostrating ourselves at Thy door. We have fallen from Thee by our iniquity, and are by nature heirs of death, and a thousand-fold more children of hell by our sinful practice; but of Thine infinite grace Thou hast promised mercy to us in Christ, if we will but turn to Thee with all our hearts; therefore, upon the call of Thy Gospel, we are now come in, and, throwing down our weapons, submit ourselves to Thy mercy.

And because Thou requirest, as the condition of our peace with Thee, that we should put away our idols, and be at defiance with all Thine enemies, which, we acknowledge, we have wickedly sided with against Thee, we here, from the bottom of our hearts, renounce them all; firmly covenanting with Thee not to allow ourselves in any known sin, but conscientiously to use all the means that we know Thou hast prescribed for the death and utter destruction of all our corruptions. And whereas, formerly, we have inordinately let out our affections upon the world, we do here resign our hearts to Thee; humbly protesting before Thy glorious Majesty, that it is our firm resolution, and that we do unfeignedly desire grace from Thee, that when Thou shalt call us hereunto, we may practice this our resolution, to forsake all that is dear unto us in this world, rather than turn from Thee to the ways of sin; and that we will watch against

all temptations, whether of prosperity or adversity, lest they should withdraw our hearts from Thee, beseeching Thee also to help us against the temptations of Satan, to whose wicked suggestions we resolve, by Thy grace, never to yield. And because our own righteousness is but filthy rags, we renounce all confidence therein ; and acknowledge that we are of ourselves hopeless, helpless, undone creatures, without righteousness or strength.

And forasmuch as Thou hast, of Thy boundless mercy, offered most graciously to us, wretched sinners, to be again our God through Christ, if we would accept of Thee ; we call heaven and earth to record this day, that we do here solemnly avouch Thee for the Lord our God ; and with all possible veneration, bowing our souls before Thy most sacred Majesty, we do here give up ourselves to Thee, the Lord Jehovah, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, for Thy servants ; promising and vowing to serve Thee, in holiness and righteousness, all the days of our lives.

And since Thou hast appointed the Lord Jesus Christ the only means of coming unto Thee, we do here, upon our bended knees, accept of Him as the only new and living way by which sinners may have access to Thee.

O blessed Jesus, we come to Thee hungry, wretched, miserable, blind, and naked ; guilty, condemned malefactors, unworthy to wash the feet of the servants of our Lord, much more to be joined in covenant to the King of Glory ; but since such is Thine unparalleled love, we here, with all our power, accept Thee, and take Thee for our head and Lord ; for better, for worse ; for richer, for poorer ; for all times and conditions, to love, honor, and obey Thee be-

fore all others, and this to the death. We embrace Thee in all Thy offices; we renounce our own worthiness, and do here avow Thee for the Lord, our righteousness; we renounce our own wisdom, and do here take Thee for our only guide; we renounce our own will, and do take Thy will for our law.

And since Thou hast told us we must suffer if we will reign, we do here covenant with Thee, to take our lot as it falls with Thee, and, by Thy grace assisting, to run all hazards with Thee; verily purposing, that neither life nor death shall part between Thee and us.

And because Thou hast been pleased to give us Thy holy laws as the rule of our lives, and the way in which we should walk to Thy kingdom, we do here willingly put ourselves under Thy yoke, and set our shoulders to Thy burden; and, subscribing to all Thy laws, as holy, just, and good, we solemnly take them as the rule of our words, thoughts, and actions; promising that, though our flesh contradict and rebel, we will endeavor to order and govern our whole lives according to Thy direction.

[Here shall follow a season of silent prayer. Then the whole Congregation, led by the Minister, shall repeat audibly the following words:]

Now, Almighty God, Searcher of Hearts, Thou knowest that I make this Covenant with Thee this day without any known guile or reservation, beseeching Thee, if Thou espiest any flaw or falsehood therein, that Thou wouldst discover it to me, and help me to do it aright.

And now, glory be to Thee, O God the Father, whom I

shall be bold, from this day forward, to look upon as my God and Father, that ever Thou shouldst find out such a way for the recovery of undone sinners. Glory be to Thee, O God the Son, who hast loved me, and washed me from my sins in Thine own blood, and art now become my Saviour and Redeemer.

Glory be to Thee, O God the Holy Ghost, who, by the finger of Thine Almighty power, hast turned about my heart from sin to God.

O great Jehovah, the Lord God Omnipotent, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, Thou art now become my covenant-friend, and I, through Thine infinite grace, have become Thy covenant-servant. Amen. And the covenant which I have made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven.

[The Minister may here conclude with singing and extemporaneous prayer.]

NOTE.—*To members of the Church.* This covenant we advise you to make, not only in heart, but in word; not only in word, but in writing; and that you would, with all possible reverence, spread the writing before the Lord, as if you would present it to Him as your act and deed; and when you have done this, set your hand to it; keep it as a memorial of the solemn transactions that have passed between God and you, and that you may have recourse to it in doubts and temptations.

