



MEMORIAL VOLUME.

COVENANT RENOVATION

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"They shall ask the way to Zion, with their faces thitherward, saying, Come, and let us join ourselves to the LORD, in a perpetual covenant, that shall not be forgotten." Jer. 50: 5.

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THE POSITION AND DUTY OF COVENANTERS.

BY REV. A. M. MILLIGAN.

PSALM 56 : 12. "Thy vows are upon me, O God."

I FEEL all the difficulty and responsibility of undertaking to lead the devotions of a synod of elders and ministers in the closing exercises of such an occasion as this ; and it is only in the strength of promised assistance that I would undertake it. What shall be a fitting close to such a service ? Let us meditate together upon the position in which we stand after such a transaction as that in which we have been engaged. It is expressed in the language of my text : "Thy vows are upon me, O God."

Let us consider the relations in which we stand, the responsibilities, duties and privileges of these relations.

I. As a church we are married to Christ.

Isa. 54 : 5, "For thy Maker is thine husband; the Lord of Hosts is his name." Isa. 62 : 5, "As a young man marieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee : and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee."

There is no earthly relationship so near as that of the husband and the wife. Brothers may walk together for a period ; but at length their tastes, inclinations, or accidental circumstances, drift them asunder. They follow different pursuits, enter different fields of labor, and form other family relations that lead them far apart. The father and the son, the mother and her babe, may for a

time seem but parts of each other ; but eventually the son forsakes father and mother and cleaves to his wife, the daughter forgets her father's house and her own people and casts in her lot with her husband, and "they twain shall be one flesh." Though human statutes have in some instances separated the interests of husband and wife, and made too easy the separation of the marriage tie, yet the divine rule is explicit : "What, therefore, God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." Only when thus united do they constitute the perfect human being. It is this unity and identity of interest that has made this relation the most fitting expression of the relation between Christ and the church ; "the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church." When Adam looked upon his wife, formed of his rib and clinging to his side, he felt that she was part of himself. So Christ and his church are one ; their interests are identical. Her children are his children, her members are his members ; she is his body, "the fulness of him that filleth all in all." She shall sit with him upon his throne as he sits with his Father upon his throne. The Son of God bears a different relation to his Father from that which any other son bears to any other father. "I and my Father are one," and he prays for his church "that they all may be one ; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us."

This relation is constituted not in the act of loving, although that is the force that draws them together ; not in their association, although that is the result of it ; but in the act of covenanting, the marriage—the divine institution in which this relation is represented and sealed.

The importance of the transaction in which we have been engaged, consists not so much in the circumstance that we have come together and pledged ourselves to God and one another, as in the fact that this pledge is the divine institution by which God has ordained that he would signify and seal to us the union and identity of Christ with his church. This is not expressed in the union of members with the church in baptism, nor in the celebration and participation of the Lord's supper, any more than birth and baptism are marriage. The divine institution for expressing this union is covenanting. In this the church as a body, a unit, gives herself to Christ, and Christ gives himself to her. The terms on which the contract is formed are of his prescription ; it is her's to accept them, and only on those terms can it be consummated. "Thy Maker is thine husband." "For he is thy Lord ; worship thou him."

The privileges of this relation are many and great. Honored as the spouse of Christ, she bears his name. His name is "The Lord our righteousness," and "this is the name wherewith she shall be called, The Lord our righteousness." Hitherto she has enjoyed occasional visits interspersed with long and weary withdrawals, while she was left to search and inquire, "Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?" but now she shall be brought unto the King into his palace, and there she shall abide. Of her he will say: "This is my rest forever: here will I dwell ; for I have desired it."

The presence of Christ in his church by his Spirit, animating, comforting, strengthening and rejoicing her, will be the direct result. He will be present in her courts,

guiding her counsels; present in her ordinances, making them the power of God unto salvation; present with her ministers, clothing them with health and salvation, endowing them with gifts and graces, and causing her saints to rejoice. It was this that gave effect to Peter's preaching after the pentecostal effusion. This made Livingstone's sermon at the Kirk of Shotts melt the hearts of the multitude and draw them to Christ. This gave Alexander Henderson that success at St. Andrew's that brought the people of that city into covenant with God. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." This gave Scotland her Knox, her Gillespie, her Cargill and her Renwick. It was this that prepared her heroes to jeopard their lives on the high places of the field, and even her tender maidens to dare death on the scaffold, and in the fire and flood. And now to the church that has just plighted her vows to her head and husband, the bridegroom says, "Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse: thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck. How fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse! How much better is thy love than wine!" "The king is held in the galleries."

These privileges bring with them corresponding obligations and duties. The honor of her covenant God must be her care, ever jealous of his prerogative she will not give his glory to another. Neither mitred bishop nor crowned monarch may usurp that headship, which belongs to her only Head and Lord. As she shall share his honor, so she will bear his reproach. Is he crucified, she will glory in his cross. Is he without the camp, she

will go forth to him without the camp. Is he in the wilderness, she will be seen in the wilderness leaning on his arm. She can be party to no compact which would rob him of his well-earned honor, nor can she ever consent that he should be dethroned. It is hers to bring forth the man-child that shall rule the nations; to rear an intelligent, pious, patriotic and freedom-loving community, upon which the kingdom of Christ may be erected; to train sturdy defenders of civil and religious liberty, into whose hands, as the people of the saints of the Most High, Christ will give the kingdom, the dominion and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heavens; to erect an everlasting and universal kingdom, with Christ as its acknowledged head.

Contemplate the act in which you have just been engaged in its association with surrounding events. The Apostle John (Rev. 19,) represents the judgment of the great whore that corrupts the nations, as immediately followed by the marriage of the Lamb. The world has just witnessed the heaven-daring act of the man of sin, exalting himself above all that is called God and that is worshipped, and usurping divine prerogative in the dogma of papal infallibility. No sooner did he thus exalt himself to heaven than God thrust him down to hell. His capital city is wrested from him; the imperial throne that supported him is cast down by the mighty power it had challenged; France, crushed by a foreign power, is left to its fate; Paris is ground to powder under the heels of its own infuriated people; the masses, thrown into anarchy, and incited to fury by communistic leaders, gnaw their tongues for pain, curse God and

look upward. Babylon's sins have reached unto heaven and God hath remembered her iniquities, and the smoke of her torment ascendeth up forever and ever.

Right upon the heels of these events, the witnessing church of God on this side of the sea is moved to enter into covenant with God. While his judgments are consuming the great whore; while her smoke is rising, and multitudes are shouting, "True and righteous are his judgments," it is our blessed privilege to join the heavenly chorus, and sing, "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready." Bride of Christ: Your vows are recorded on high, received with shouts by the redeemed, while a glad throng press near to read the inscription on the crown you have placed on the brow of your King in the day of his espousals and of the gladness of his heart, and to trace out the names, the immortal names, of the hundred and forty-four, who have sealed their marriage covenant.

II. As a holy nation, a peculiar people, we have sworn allegiance to our King.

No man can divest himself of his relations and obligations to civil society, nor can civil society or its members ever divest themselves of their duty to God. The first covenant transaction God ever entered into with man, was with man as a member of society. The covenant of works was not made with Adam as an individual, for it affected the race; not as an ecclesiastic, for there was no church, nor did that act constitute the church, for the church was not needed,

and was not constituted till after the fall ; but that covenant transaction constituted the state, made Adam the head of it, and established the relation between Adam, as the head of the lower creation, and God. It gave him authority over all terrestrial things, one tree only excepted, which was to remind him of his subjection to God.

The Israelites at Mount Sinai were organized not only into a church but also into a nation. The covenant written on tables of stone was a national constitution. When Christ appeared he came not merely as a prophet and priest but also as a king. To Pilate, in his trial, he declared : "Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world." He was crucified with a crown of thorns on his head, and the superscription written over, "The King of the Jews." To his disciples he gave the command, "Preach the kingdom of God."

Our fathers' covenants contained prominently the civil element. The National Covenant was the constitution of the Scottish nation. To it the king was sworn at his coronation, and all the civil functionaries were required to swear it on their investiture with office. The Solemn League and Covenant was a treaty between the three kingdoms, and bound them as nations to be faithful to God, the true religion and each other.

As they were civil compacts binding the subject to the throne of Britain, they bind neither us nor our brethren in the British Isles. That covenant-kingdom of which they were the constitution and the bond of union is revolutionized, the constitution has been overturned, the

covenants violated, and to that covenant-breaking throne the covenanter is no longer bound, and to those guilty lands the violated covenants now secure only the penalty of their violation. But though that goodly and beautiful house which our fathers reared is in ruins, yet the very rubbish and stones of it are dear to the saints, and every principle of truth and order which those covenants contained is treasured as a sacred legacy from martyred and worthy forefathers. To the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, as far as it was represented in those kingdoms, and in those covenants, the covenanters and their representatives, in every age and in any land, are, and must be forever, bound. There never can be a failure on God's part to fulfil the covenant that would release the other contracting party. Those covenants bind the covenanters and their descendants wherever they may be, to labor to set up, extend and establish the kingdom of Christ.

At the time those covenants were taken, this land was a colonial dependency of Great Britain. The great majority of those who peopled these States were descendants of those who swore those covenants. Whether this nation as such, is bound by those covenant bonds, or entitled to those covenant privileges, I shall not stop to inquire. This land and its people are now no longer a part of the British nation. We, who hold ourselves bound by the obligations of those covenants, and entitled to the blessings they secure, claim no existing relation to the throne of Great Britain, nor to those covenants as British covenants. Our relations to civil society are here. This is our country, the land of our birth or

our adoption ; to it we owe the obligations of the patriot. We are part of this nation, and share the responsibility of its character and acts, and we can divest ourselves of responsibility for its sins only by making our protest as public as are the evils against which we protest.

While we are part of this nation, deeply interested in its welfare, and sharing its hopes and fears, we have ever refused to incorporate or identify ourselves with that political society in the nation which formed and administers its government, because, in forming its government and framing the constitution which expresses its character and life, it has utterly ignored the authority of God. In the constitution the people are recognized as possessing that authority which belongs only to God, and the will of the people constitutionally expressed is declared to be the supreme law of the land. It enacts a godless oath by which the chief magistrate shall be qualified for his office, and authorizes the violation of the Sabbath. In the language of God's complaint against Israel by the prophet Hosea, "Israel hath cast off the thing that is good : the enemy shall pursue him. 'They have set up kings, but not by me : they have made princes, and I knew it not : of their silver and their gold have they made them idols, that they may be cut off.'" On account of this insult offered to God, and this attitude of rebellion against his authority in which the nation stands, we have occupied a position of protest and separation from the government, and in this our covenant we publish and proclaim our sworn refusal to be a party to the plot "against the Lord and his Christ, to break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us." We swear

our allegiance to him whom the nation refuseth, and present his claims to the Christian people of the land as demanding their most earnest attention. Christians: is your Redeemer Lord of all? Has the Father committed all judgment to the Son, and does he require that all men should honor the Son even as they honor the Father? Has God declared that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord? Has God declared that the nation and kingdom that will not serve the church's Head shall perish? And will you hesitate to give him your allegiance, to place the crown of your nation at his feet, and its sceptre in his hand? Will souls purchased by his blood refuse this reasonable service?

We demand of this nation that it recognize, in its constitution, Jehovah as the foundation and author of government; the Mediator, Jesus Christ, as the appointed administrator of the divine government; the revealed will of God as the rule by which nations must frame their laws, and the true religion as the bond by which the state is anchored to the throne of God. These are God's claims upon the nation; and these claims, in his name and by his authority, we proffer, and to them the nation must answer. Like Pontius Pilate and the Jews, the nation has Christ upon its hands; and like the Roman governor, it may well ask, "What shall I do with Jesus, which is called Christ?" It must either crown or crucify him. Until these claims were distinctly presented, the nation might claim a partial exemption from the penalty of their neglect, on the plea of ignorance; but now, in the providence of God, they are forced upon its atten-

tion, and the responsibility must be met. By this our covenant we have bound ourselves not to incorporate with the government until it acknowledge and honor our Lord, and have given our pledge that we will labor to the extent of our ability for this reform, until it be effected.

In Independence Hall forty-six men laid the foundation of this great nation in the bill of human rights they gave to the world, and which they pledged their fortunes, their sacred honor and their lives to maintain. Here, one hundred and forty-four men have given to the world a proclamation of the rights of God and the claims of his Christ, and our covenant engagement to maintain them at every sacrifice. We are erecting a greater, more beneficent and more glorious kingdom, that shall last through all ages, and fill the whole earth. Its motto is, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men;" and the solemnity of this our oath is our pledge to God and the world that we will never turn back till it be established. This is a representation of that kingdom for whose coming Christ taught his disciples to pray; these are its subjects, and that is its constitution. It is the stone cut out of the mountain that shall become a great mountain, and fill the whole earth. "Lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations." "The Lord his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them;" "his king shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted." "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." We have rallied around our King; we have sworn

to him our allegiance ; and when the chronicles of the kingdom of Christ shall be written, and the names of those who were its early supporters recorded, this parchment will be brought forth as a witness, and these names enrolled with honor among his devoted followers, as men who, in the dark days, in the hold, in the wilderness, like Amasai, have said, "Thine are we, David, and on thy side, thou son of Jesse : peace, peace be unto thee, and peace be to thy helpers ; for thy God helpeth thee."

III. As enlisted soldiers of the cross, we have taken the soldier's oath. Our work is not yet done, hardly well begun. We see not yet all things put under Christ, but we know that he is seated at the Father's right hand, waiting till his enemies be made his footstool. We may by faith see him as Joshua saw him beyond Jordan, with his sword drawn in his hand, coming as the Captain of the host of the Lord. There must be overturning, overturning, overturning, before he come whose right it is to reign. Hitherto we have been only skirmishing on the outposts ; we must storm the citadel. We have run with the footmen, and they have wearied us ; but we must contend with horses. In the land of peace they have wearied us ; we must come to the swellings of Jordan. If the teachings of prophecy be any guide, if the signs of the times teach any lesson, it is that we are approaching the great struggle of the ages. Satan has come down, having great wrath because he knows he hath but a short time. The three unclean spirits like frogs have gone forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. Infidelity, with its com-

munistic cohort, is rapidly gathering its forces. Despotism, with its ally, popery, is strongly entrenched in its strongholds, and is putting forth superhuman efforts to rally its forces. All the secret oath-bound fraternities, from Jesuitry the prolific parent of the brood, and Masonry with its high-sounding claim to antiquity, through the whole vile spawn whose name is legion to the Ku-Klux-Klan, working in secret conclave, perpetrating their deeds of darkness and dreading the light, have undermined all the foundations of society—have their mines laid, and their Guy Fawkes ready, torch in hand, to fire the train, explode the magazine, and scatter in ruins every institution that stands in the way of their selfish and ambitious projects. And Spiritualism, allied with hell, and calling its demons from the vasty deep—latest born of the father of lies—is filling the air with its croakings. As the apostle says, they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, and their coming is after the working of Satan, with all power and signs, and lying wonders, deceiving, if it were possible, the very elect.

All these forces, which, like a flood of waters, the dragon is pouring out of his mouth to overwhelm the woman and her man-child, are arrayed against the kingdom of Christ. They have possession of the field; they are fortified in their strongholds; empires, kingdoms and republics are under their sway. Even in this asylum of the persecuted, this land of the pilgrims, infidelity has entrenched itself in the constitution. Popery reigns in our principal cities; while the powers of darkness have their secret ramifications through all our institutions, both civil and ecclesiastical. The

land must be conquered before it can be possessed. As the wars of Joshua and David prepared the way for the peaceful reign of Solomon, so it is through great tribulation we must inherit the kingdom.

The walls of Jericho must come down. For though the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, they are mighty, through God, to pull down the strongholds; the blast of the ram's-horn trumpets will lay them low.

Soldiers of the cross: are you ready for the campaign? Will you meet the hardships of the march and dare the dangers of the field? I have your answer; this covenant is your pledge; the bond that binds you to your Captain, to the cause, and to each other. Brothers, in the cause of God, led by your elder Brother, you are invincible. As Scotland's heroes in the hour of defeat and disaster, when the unknown knight lifted his visor and discovered to them the face of their leader, their own William Wallace, with a shout that turned defeat into victory, followed their leader, so you, followers of the Lamb, having seen that he who goes before you is the Lord, strong and mighty, the Lord, mighty in battle, be assured of success. Follow wheresoever he leads, for he will lead you to victory. Your enemy is subtle, untiring and malignant, working by guile and in the dark, organizing every form of evil into one Jesuitical horde, led by the prince of darkness. But your Redeemer is mighty; your weapon is the sword of the Spirit, and the victory that overcomes the world is your faith. The enemy is striving to rob you of your arms by taking the Bible from your children in the schools; to drive you from your strongest position by robbing you of your Sabbath; attack-

ing the sacred bond of society, the marriage relation, and making unrelenting warfare upon morality and religion in every conceivable form and way ; and all the time singing the siren song of peace and liberty to quiet your fears, until, bound hand and foot, you are helpless in his power.

But the omens are not all evil. There are unmistakable evidences that the Captain of the Lord's host, with his sword drawn in his hand, is on the march. There is a sound of going in the tops of the mulberry trees ; the nations have beheld him coming from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah. Austria has been stricken down ; France lies bleeding ; the kingdom of the man of sin is no more. The leaves of the tree of life are being wafted by the Bible Society into the dark places of the earth for the healing of the nations. The angel, having the everlasting gospel to preach, is flying through the heavens, and his trumpet-voice is waking the echoes of earth's utmost shores ; the Chinese wall is broken down ; the harbors of Japan are open to the gospel-freighted ships, and even the Eternal City has accepted the Bible.

On this side of the Atlantic the signs are equally significant. The daring assaults made against morality, Christianity, the Bible and the Sabbath, and the reckless and reeking corruption, manifesting itself in high places, are rousing Christian and patriotic men to a sense of the danger ; the pulpit and the press are beginning to speak out ; bands of earnest men are forming for the fray, and there looms in our near horizon a tempest that is destined to shake our political fabric to its very foundation. But

the issue is not doubtful. The Lamb shall overcome them, and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.

Bride of the Lamb ! This covenant is your marriage certificate. Children of the church ! You need no longer ask for the bill of your mother's divorcement. She has returned to her first love. She has brought back the glorious days of her forefathers' covenants. Citizens of Zion ! Here is your declaration of independence—the magna charta of your liberty. Soldiers of the cross ! Here is your muster-roll, and here are your names, placed on this imperishable instrument ; they are destined either to glory or infamy. Reformed Presbyterian Church of America ! You are now in covenant with God, and this is your bond. Treasure it up where no sacrilegious hand can deface or destroy it. Make for it an ark of precious wood and overlay it with gold. It is the covenant of God with his new testament Israel. Spread it before your children. Hold it up before the rising ministry, that they may draw inspiration from it for their work. Rear for it a memorial building in which the sons of the prophets shall be polished as shafts for the quiver of the Almighty. And may we never forget that thy vows are upon us, O God.