

Westminster Confession of Faith (1646)

22.1 A lawful oath is a part of religious worship, wherein, upon just occasion, the person swearing solemnly calleth God to witness what he asserteth, or promiseth; and to judge him according to the truth or falsehood of what he sweareth.

22.5 A vow is of the like nature with a promissory oath, and ought to be made with the like religious care, and to be performed with the like faithfulness.

22.6 [A vow] is not to be made to any creature, but to God alone: and, that it may be accepted, it is to be made voluntarily, out of faith, and conscience of duty, in way of thankfulness for mercy received, or for the obtaining of what we want; whereby we more strictly bind ourselves to necessary duties; or to other things, so far and so long as they may fitly conduce thereunto.

RPCNA Testimony (1980)

22.4 An oath is a confirmatory act calling God to witness the performance of a promise. An oath may confirm a vow or a covenant.

22.5 A vow in Scripture is an act of voluntary dedication to God of one's person, goods or service. A vow is usually made by an individual.

22.6 While it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between the uses in Scripture of the words "vow" and "covenant," a covenant that men make with God differs from a vow in that it is a corporate act of pledging obedience to what God has commanded in His covenant.

28.7 Baptism is not to be administered to the infants of persons who, though members of the church, have so neglected the means of grace as to cast doubt on their profession, or their intention to fulfill the baptismal vows. (Ps. 76:11)

Westminster Larger Catechism (1647)

Q. 165 What is Baptism? A. Baptism is a Sacrament of the New Testament, wherein Christ hath ordained the washing with water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, to be a sign and seal of ingrafting into himself, of remission of sins by his blood, and regeneration by his Spirit; of adoption, and resurrection unto everlasting life; and whereby the parties baptized are solemnly admitted into the visible Church, and enter into an open and professed engagement to be wholly and only the Lord's.

Q. 167 How is our Baptism to be improved by us? A. The needful but much neglected duty of improving our Baptism, is to be performed by us all our life long, especially in the time of temptation, and when we are present at the administration of it to others, by serious and thankful consideration of the nature of it, and of the ends for which Christ instituted it, the privileges and benefits conferred and sealed thereby, and our solemn vow made therein; by being humbled for our sinful defilement, our falling short of, and walking contrary to, the grace of the Baptism and our engagements; by growing up to assurance of pardon of sin, and of all other blessings sealed to us in that Sacrament; by drawing strength from the death and resurrection of Christ, into whom we are baptized, for the mortifying of sin, and quickening of grace; and by endeavoring to live by faith, to have our conversation in holiness and righteousness, as those that have therein given up their names to Christ; and to walk in brotherly love, as being baptized by the same Spirit into one body. [Cf. WCF 21.5]

Q. 168 What is the Lord's Supper? A. The Lord's Supper is a Sacrament of the New Testament, wherein, by giving and receiving bread and wine according to the appointment of Jesus Christ, his death is shewed forth; and they that worthily communicate feed upon his body and blood, to their spiritual nourishment and growth in grace; have their union and communion with him confirmed; testify and renew their thankfulness, and engagement to God, and their mutual love and fellowship each with other, as members of the same mystical body.

Q. 174 What is required of them that receive the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper in the time of the administration of it? A. It is required of them that receive the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, that, during the time of the administration of it, with all holy reverence and attention they wait upon God in that ordinance, diligently observe the sacramental elements and

actions, heedfully discern the Lord's body, and affectionately meditate on his death and sufferings, and thereby stir up themselves to a vigorous exercise of their graces; in judging themselves and sorrowing for sin; in earnest hungering and thirsting after Christ, feeding on him by faith, receiving of his fulness, trusting in his merits, rejoicing in his love, giving thanks for his grace; in renewing of their covenant with God, and love to all the saints.

Q. 175 What is the duty of Christians, after they have received the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper? A. The duty of Christians, after they have received the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, is seriously to consider how they have behaved themselves therein, and with what success; if they find quickening and comfort, to bless God for it, beg the continuance of it, watch against relapses, fulfill their vows, and encourage themselves to a frequent attendance on that ordinance: but if they find no present benefit, more exactly to review their preparation to, and carriage at, the Sacrament; in both which, if they can approve themselves to God and their own consciences, they are to wait for the fruit of it in due time: but, if they see that they have failed in either, they are to be humbled, and to attend upon it afterward with more care and diligence.

RPCNA Directory for Church Government (1987)

2.2 (D-4) Children of communicant members of the Church, in consequence of their covenant relationship, shall receive baptism, pastoral care and instruction, and are baptized members of the Church, but are not to be admitted to the Lord's Supper until they have reached years of understanding and have voluntarily professed their faith in Christ and assumed for themselves the vows and obligations of the Covenant of Church Membership. Baptized members have no vote in the congregational meetings.

2.10 (D-6) The presbytery shall arrange for appropriate discussions and examinations of all the communicant members of the church on the basis of the Covenant of Church Membership, and the ordained officers also on the basis of the vows related to their respective offices.

RPCNA Book of Discipline (2003)

1.6.3 (E-18) Restoration of an excommunicated member shall include a renewal of his vows of church membership.

RPCNA Directory of Public Worship (2010)

5.5f (F-18) If rings are used, the pastor may ask, "What pledge do you give of your marriage vows?" As (each) ring is presented to its recipient, the pastor may say, "Give and receive this ring as a token of your marriage vows. May it be to you a symbol of the value, constancy, and purity of your wedded love, and a seal of the solemn vows you have made to one another before God."

Wm. Roberts' R.P. Catechism (1853)

Q. 428 Wherein does a covenant differ from a law, a vow, and an oath? **A. (1)** It differs from a law in this, that it supposes mutual stipulations, while in a law there is no stipulation whatever, but simply the authority of a superior enjoining obedience on an inferior. **(2)** It differs from a vow, inasmuch as, while a covenant supposes engagement on both sides, a vow supposes engagement on one side only; a person who vows engaging to perform some particular service without any promise being supposed to be annexed to the performance. **(3)** It differs from an oath; an oath being nothing more than a solemn appeal to God for the truth of some assertion that is made, without, as in a covenant, either an engagement to duty, or promise of reward. **(4)** In a covenant, then, there is engagement by two parties—in a vow there is engagement by one party only—in an oath there is no engagement at all.

Q. 429 Does a covenant, whilst it differs from each, at the same time suppose the existence of a law, and include both an oath and a vow? **A.** Yes. A covenant proceeds upon the supposition of something being obligatory, and here is the idea of law. It implies an engagement to perform what is admitted to possess the obligation; and here is the idea of a vow. It supposes the covenanter to appeal to God with regard to the sincerity of his intentions, and here is the idea of an oath.