

# **An Historical Defense Of Covenanting And The Solemn League And Covenant # 8**

Malachi 2:10  
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In the previous sermon, we answered the question as to whether the descending obligation of the Solemn League and Covenant ended when the Colonies declared their independence from their mother country of England and formed a new nation calling themselves the United States of America, or whether the descending obligation of the Solemn League and Covenant continued uninterrupted from the British Colonies to the United States of America after the Declaration of Independence (July 4, 1776)? It was answered that although the political identity of the British Colonies died and a new political identity was born (which was called the United States of America), the moral person (as the posterity of England) did not die with the British Colonies, but continued to live with the United States of America. Thus, the descending obligation of the Solemn League and Covenant upon the moral person of the posterity of England did not die with the British Colonies, but continued upon the same moral person under a new political identity called the United States of America. There is one more example I would like to add from the very words of the Declaration of Independence that further demonstrates the continuity of the same moral person from the British Colonies to the United States of America (and thus the descending obligation of the Solemn League and Covenant likewise passing from the moral person of the British Colonies to the same moral person of the United States of America).

The Representatives of the United States of America in General Congress (July 4, 1776) refer to the citizens of Britain as “OUR British brethren.”

Nor have WE been wanting in attention to OUR British brethren. WE have warned them from time to time of attempts by their legislature to extend an unwarrantable jurisdiction over US.

Note, first of all, that even as the Representatives of the United States of America in General Congress declare themselves free of British rule, they nevertheless look back to the moral injuries committed against them as a moral person (when they were British Colonies) as committed against the same moral person that now declares their independence from Britain. For the same “WE” that assumes the name United States of America and declares their independence from Britain is the same “WE” that had unwarrantable jurisdiction extended over them as British Colonies. The United States does not distinguish itself from the former British Colonies by referring to the British Colonies as “THEY” and the United States as “WE”, but rather refers to both the British Colonies and the United States as “WE.”

Note, secondly, that the same “WE” that assumes the name United States of America and declares their independence from Britain is the same “WE” that still identifies all those of Britain as “OUR British brethren.” So let’s see if we can figure this one out. The United States of America calls Britain “OUR British brethren.” That must mean the United States of America and Britain must have the same mother country—England. Clearly, the United States of America own themselves to be the continued posterity of the same mother country with those they call “OUR British brethren.” Don’t miss this. Britain is not merely said TO HAVE BEEN IN THE PAST the brethren of the British Colonies of North America, but rather is said TO BE PRESENTLY (even after the Declaration of Independence is published) “OUR British brethren. Why? Because Britain and the United States are the posterity of the same mother—England.

Now if the same moral person before God continues even though the political identity before man changes from being British Colonies to the United States of America, how much more clearly it should be acknowledged by all that the same moral person before God continues

even though a new constitution is adopted by the same nation that was previously established. In other words, if the Solemn League and Covenant between God and the posterity of England bound the moral person of the United States of America after they declared their independence from Britain and formed a new political identity before man (as has been demonstrated from both Scripture and history in previous sermons), then certainly the same moral person of the United States of America (as the posterity of England) continued to be bound by the Solemn League and Covenant with God after they ratified the Articles of Confederation (March 1, 1781) and the United States Constitution (March 4, 1789). This is simply an argument from the greater to the lesser. If the same moral person (namely, the posterity of England) continued after forming an entirely new political identity (the United States of America), then certainly the same moral person (as the posterity of England) continued when the same political identity (namely, the United States of America) was retained though a new constitution was established. Clearly, in both the Articles of Confederation and the United States Constitution, it is assumed that the same national identity that was formed and called the United States of America (in the Declaration of Independence) continues to exist as the United States of America (under the Articles of Confederation and the United States Constitution). In the Declaration of Independence we read:

We, therefore, the Representatives of the United States of America . . . .

In Article 1 of the Articles of Confederation we read:

The Stile of this Confederacy shall be "The United States of America".

And in the Preamble of the Constitution of the United States of America we read:

We the people of the United States . . . . do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

And if the same national identity (namely, the United States of America) continued from the Declaration of Independence to the Articles of Confederations and to the U.S. Constitution, then certainly the same moral person likewise continued from the Declaration of Independence to the U.S. Constitution. And if that moral person (as the posterity of England) was bound by the Solemn League and Covenant with God after the Declaration of Independence, then it continued to be bound after the Articles of Confederations and after the U.S. Constitution, for the United States of America continued to be the same moral person (namely, the posterity of England) regardless of the changes made to their political identity before man or regardless of the changes made to their political constitutions.

## **I. The Violation of a National Covenant Leads to the Ruin of a Nation (Malachi 2:10).**

A. Dear ones, when covenants made with God become common and ordinary (which is what the word “profane” means), then we will neither honor nor live up to our covenants with one another as well. For on the one hand, if our word to Almighty God means nothing, our word to mere perishable corruptible human beings will soon follow down the same path. But on the other hand, if we are a people who take our vows and covenants to God seriously, and if we do not consider our vows and covenants to God to be a heavy burden that we inwardly despise but rather our greatest delight to be in covenant with the infinite and everlasting God of our salvation, the effect of that faith in the Lord and love for the Lord and His covenant will be that we will likewise keep our covenants with one another. Dear ones, If we truly desire and pray for the end of the state-endorsed murder of children in the womb, we must as a nation understand that treachery to one another follows and flows from our treachery to God.

B. Malachi is the last prophet of God before the closing of the Old Testament canon. His prophecy occurs (between 425-400 b.c.) after God had graciously returned the exiles of Israel and Judah back to Palestine and after the temple had been rebuilt. Under Ezra and Nehemiah there had been national covenant renewals (Ezra 10:3; Nehemiah 9:38), and a turning from their sins to their gracious God. But now a few years has passed since the last covenant renewal under Nehemiah, and the land is polluted again with complete disregard of covenant duties owed to one another. And as we see in our text (Malachi 2:10), the treachery shown in disregarding covenanted duties owed to one another was due to the fact that the National Covenant of their fathers made at Mt. Sinai was being profaned. Mark it down. A covenanted nation will deal treacherously in breaking covenant with one another when that nation profanes a National Covenant made with God. Malachi prophecies 1,000 years after the National Covenant was made between God and Israel at Mt. Sinai, and yet the generation living at the time of Malachi is guilty of profaning “the covenant of their fathers” because the obligation of that National Covenant extended to posterity in all succeeding generations. Again we see that the passing of time, the breaking of covenant, the changing of forms of government, the declaration of independence of the 10 tribes from the mother country, the removal of Israel and Judah to other nations, none of these circumstances could terminate a National Covenant made with God.

C. Consider briefly how covenants between the Israelites were violated when the National Covenant of their forefathers made with God at Mt. Sinai was violated. Two covenants between fellow Israelites are mentioned in particular.

1. The covenant of the priesthood (or ministry) in speaking the truth of God was broken (Malachi 2:7-8). This is one of the first judgments that God brings upon a covenanted nation when that nation turns its back upon its National Covenant with God. Error in doctrine,

impure worship, unbiblical church government and discipline follow covenant-breaking with God, which then brings schism, division and denominationalism into a nation. Whereas unity and uniformity in doctrine, worship, discipline and government is the fruit of a nation that honors its covenant with God, division and multiformity in doctrine, worship, discipline and government is the fruit of a nation that dishonors, profanes, forgets, and despises its covenant with God. The rampant, unchecked heresies that riddle this nation which prizes so much its so-called “religious liberty” is the fruit of national covenant-breaking. However, dear ones, God has never given an individual, church or nation the “liberty” to sin against Him or to profess and practice heresy. The result of national covenant-breaking is the same for us as it was for Israel of old—the covenant of the ministry is broken and the souls of millions of people are lost because the gospel truth which Christ has alone authorized to be preached no longer proceeds from the mouths of so many ministers. The sins of the people are no longer exposed in breaking covenant with God. The people worship God according to their own inclinations rather than according to the prescription of God found in His Word. The one true Reformed religion taught in Scripture, which alone glorifies God, has become perverted and man-centered in every way rather than Christ-centered. Dear ones, if we would see reformation in the Church of Christ in this nation, it must begin with mourning over our treachery in breaking our Solemn League and Covenant with God as a nation.

2. A second covenant with man that was egregiously violated among the people of Israel when they profaned the National Covenant of their forefathers made with God was the covenant of marriage (Malachi 2:13-14). Dear ones, when we do not honor our covenants with God, it will be most manifest in our own homes with our spouses and with our children. The home, the marriage, and the family will suffer God’s judgment when we profane (and treat as common) our covenant with God (whether our National Covenant with God, whether our baptismal

covenant with God, whether personal covenants with God or the Covenant of Grace with God). I submit to you that the pornography that enslaves so many in this nation, the adultery, and the unlawful divorces that have no warrant from God's Word are again the result of our treachery in profaning the covenant of our forefathers made with the Lord our God on our behalf (as the posterity of England). We are a nation of covenant-breakers, and we have reaped the judgment of God of covenant-breaking and treachery of every kind against even the most unprotected and vulnerable in our nation—the unborn within the womb.

D. Dear ones, there is only hope in the Lord Jesus Christ who is called “the messenger of the covenant” in Malachi 3:1. Only Christ has kept the Covenant of Grace perfectly for all of us who are covenant-breakers. Only Christ has suffered and died for His covenant people in order to deliver them once and for all from the everlasting judgment that they all deserve for profaning everything that is holy, good and honorable that God has blessed us with. Let us each one call out to Christ, “the messenger of the covenant”, to break our hearts and grant us a repentance that mourns over our sin against our holy and gracious God, a repentance that looks to the mercy that is found in Jesus Christ alone, and a repentance that endeavors and continues to endeavor a new obedience. Dear ones, all the social justice programs, all of the political action groups, and all of the voluntary organizations in this nation will never achieve their goals of justice. God will accomplish reformation in this nation by means of the divine institutions of the family, church, and state which he has established as we turn from our covenant-breaking and renewing our Solemn League and covenant with God as an individual, family, church, and nation.

## **II. A Brief Testimony of both Church and Ministry to the Covenanted Status of this Nation.**

A. On November 11, 1743 (100 years after the Solemn League and Covenant was sworn in England, Ireland and Scotland) at Middle Octarara, Pennsylvania, a remnant of Reformed Presbyterians under the leadership of Rev. Alexander Craighead renewed the National Covenant and the Solemn League and Covenant. Being descendants of England, Ireland and Scotland they realized that they were the posterity of those original covenanters and that the colonies in America were “his majesties dominions.” Removal from the shores of their mother country did not remove the covenanted duties they owed to God. Therefore, they renewed the covenant of their fathers as God provided the occasion to do so in His wonderful providence. This covenant renewal states:

There never was any Nation, but the Nation of the Jews and THIS REALM, that were so highly honored, as for the whole Nation to enter into Covenant with the Lord [by way of the Solemn League and Covenant—GLP] . . . .

Carefully observe how those faithful Christians called the British Colonies a part of the “realm” of England that as a “whole nation” entered into the Solemn League and Covenant with the Lord. Certainly, these covenanted Christians understood the British Colonies to be bound by the Solemn League and Covenant 100 years later, for they were part of the “realm” of England. Later on in this covenant renewal, the Solemn League and Covenant is even stated to be “perpetual and of a constant binding power over this realm.”

In 1782, the recently formed Reformed Presbytery in the United States had united together with the Associate Presbyterian Church in the United States to form the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church. In doing so, the Reformed Presbytery turned their backs upon their previous profession and testimony to the descending obligation of the Solemn League and Covenant as it relates to the United States of America. The faithful Reformed Presbytery Scotland testified the following year (1783) against the treacherous covenant-breaking that had been committed by the former Reformed Presbytery in the United States in these words:



No change of place [or location—GLP] can annul the obligation of an oath to Jehovah [as in the Solemn League and Covenant—GLP], consisting of moral duties upon the person or persons who have sworn it, of which kind our solemn covenants are; and if they are of this nature where can be the objection against professing and holding out the same covenants, as to the spirit and substance of them (mutatis mutandis) to the people of America, to be accepted and sworn by them in their respective places and stations, any more than to those Isles [the British Isles—GLP]?

The Reformed Presbytery of Scotland makes it clear that simply crossing the Atlantic Ocean and forming a new Presbytery in the British Colonies or the United States of America did not annul the covenanted obligation they owed to Jehovah God under the Solemn League and Covenant any more than those owed to God who lived in the British Isles.

Samuel B. Wylie (1773-1852), Pastor of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia, correctly ties the covenanted obligation to the Solemn League and Covenant to those living in the United States of America in the following words from a sermon he preached on Covenanteding.

If he is thus bound [by the Solemn League and Covenant—GLP] in Britain, does the soil of Columbia [as in the District of Columbia or the United States of America--GLP] loose him of all obligation to, and make him independent of, the Moral Governor? In as far as this moral obligation is concerned, between national and personal covenanting, there is only a numerical difference. In the latter, one individual is personally bound; in the former, three, four, or five millions of individuals, are personally bound.

The Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America published in Overture a document by order of the Synod entitled “Testimony For Public Covenanting” which appeared February 1839 in the Church periodical, *The Reformed Presbyterian*. Here we find a clear delineation of the descending obligation of the Solemn League and Covenant to the United States of America.

The covenants of Britain extend their obligations to all who now live in Scotland, in Ireland, and in England. This is admitted by all, who in any form, maintain the descending obligation of national federal transactions. The covenants also bind all the posterity of every man, who was bound by the Solemn League and Covenant when it was sworn in 1643, by the representatives of the nation, whether he remained in Britain, or emigrated to some other country. That the

children of the actual Covenanters, when emigrating from the land of their nativity, are bound by the Covenant obligations has been always maintained by Reformed Presbyterians . . . . The colonies, at the time of entering into the Solemn League and Covenant, were an integral part of the British nation . . . . The old Congress of 1774, solemnly claimed for themselves, and for the people of the colonies whom they represented "all the rights and immunities of British Citizens." The most excellent part of their birthright and immunities, was, that they inherited a title to the covenant blessings of their ancestors, who entered into federal relations [by means of the Solemn League and Covenant—GLP] with the God of Israel.

Likewise, the same truth is taught by the Rev. Dr. James Wilson when he gave the introductory lecture (on Public Covenanting) at the opening session of the Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary (November 7, 1848).

All the colonies at the time of the swearing of the national bond of Britain [the Solemn League and Covenant—GLP], 1643, were an integral part of the [British—GLP] empire. The titles to their land were issued by the crown of England . . . . The colonies were as really the offspring of Britain, as Isaac and Jacob were of Abraham . . . .

This argument is augmented in its force, by the fact that the congress of '74 [1774—GLP], elected by the people of the colonies, solemnly claimed all the rights and immunities of British subjects . . . . The best of these immunities were these secured by the great national charter, granted us by the Church's Head—the Solemn League and Covenant.

Finally, I close with one last citation taken from a book entitled, *The Reformed Presbyterian Church in Scotland—Its Origin And History 1680-1876*, by Matthew Hutchison, pp. 406,407, wherein explanation is provided as to why Reformed Presbyterians who relocated from the British Isles to America continued to own the descending obligation of the Solemn League and Covenant

[T]he essential principles of the Covenants concerning liberty and religion, the reciprocal duties of nations and rulers, and the obligation which both owe to Christ as Governor among the nations, were binding on American churches and on American citizens who were of British origin.

Dear ones, if it is treachery for a covenanted nation to turn its back upon the covenant of its fathers, how much more treacherous for Presbyterian Churches that trace their ancestry back to the Reformed Churches of England, Ireland and Scotland to do so. We as Presbyterians (and especially Presbyterian ministers) have greatly erred and egregiously

profaned the Solemn League and Covenant by forgetting, ignoring, counting it outdated or irrelevant, disowning and despising with treachery the covenant of our fathers. God have mercy upon us all that we might fall upon our faces before the Lord and seek with broken hearts the God of the Covenant of Grace who is the same God of our Solemn League and Covenant.

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"Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto" (Galatians 3:15).