

## ORDINANCE OF COVENANTING.

(Covenanting According to the Purposes of God, Part 2)

“[P]ublic, social covenanting, is an ordinance of God, obligatory on churches and nations under the New Testament.”—Fourth Term of Communion.

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Question 1.—*What is the third revealed purpose of God which calls for the solemn act of covenanting?*

*Answer.*—*Third*, there is a people who were foreordained to make solemn vows unto God, Eph. 1:5-12. Representations are given of His people as formed for His service, 1 Pet. 2:9. According to some of these, the expression, *to form*, means to fashion, or to bring into existence, Isa. 43:6, 7, 21. And hence, because whatever is formed, is formed according to God’s purpose, His servants, to His service in all its parts, were foreordained by Him, Isa. 44:21. But besides, the meaning of the said expression, cannot, even in the foregoing passages, be limited to its literal import; it is employed to intimate that God pre-determined what His enemies should accomplish, Isa. 37:26. It is applied in reference to a covenant people to be continued to discharge their peculiar duties, and to the provisions of grace, described in most beautiful terms, Jer. 33:2. And since the purposes of God secure their fulfilment, and so His arrangements concerning His people secure their creation, regeneration, and continued support, explicitly adverted to them as predestinated to obedience, and especially the obedience thus described, Isa. 44:2, 5. Reasonings on the sovereignty of God exercised in setting apart a limited number of benefits of salvation, illustrate and assert the truth, Rom. 9:20-24. In such terms is God described as not merely having created all things, but as having predestinated some to eternal life, and decreed that others should be left to perish, Prov. 16:4; 2 Pet. 2:9. The mode of expression embodying the image of the potter agrees with the words of the OT Scriptures, Isa. 29:16. What is taught by the use of such language must therefore be implied in those declarations of the prophets, where corresponding terms are employed, for it the OT, the potter is literally, he who forms, Isa. 64:8 (the participial form is used here [*Heb. v. 7*], יָצַר; *yēšer*; *to form, fashion, ordain*). Thus, according to the apostle, the potter symbolizes Him Who predestinates, Rom. 9:21. As in the prophet’s words, He is compared to the potter, He is the sovereign Disposer of the final condition of all, Isa. 45:9. And forasmuch as, at a given period, concerning the existing house of Jacob, framed by Him, He says in regard to their descendants, also formed by them, that they are, all of them, in the character of those who avouch Him to be their God, the true Israel He acknowledges as formed for, or set apart to, that high distinction by Himself, Isa. 29:23. That the apostle had this in view, his quotations from the prophets given declare; so, it was of a people who should be objects of this promise, Hos. 2:16; and on whom the privileges thereafter described should be conferred, that was the predicted blessedness, Rom. 9:25, 26. It is to those, to whom covenanting with God is ascribed, Jer. 50:4, 5; to whom the promise found in Isaiah is made, Isa. 10:20, 21; to whom also Isaiah cries, as per the apostle, Rom. 9:27. And it was of those who, heirs of Abraham’s faith, which was counted to him for righteous, were, as he was, taken into covenant with God, and like whom none remained in the cities of the plain when these were overthrown, Isa. 1:9; Rom. 9:29.

The covenant people of God are an *appointed* people, Isa. 44:7; even as the law was *appointed* in Israel, Ps. 78:5; even as an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure, was *appointed*, 2 Sam. 23:5. The same term, denoting *to appoint*, is used in those three passages is used in the Proverbs signifying in sovereignty to ordain, Prov. 8:29 (שׁוּם; *śûm*; *to put, place, set, appoint, make*). The ancient people included first the people of Israel, Isa. 47:6; and they are the covenant people of all nations, and of every age, members of that church whose date is of ancient days, *cf.* Gen. 17:7, 8 *with* Rom. 4:11-13. By the prophet who speaks of their appointment, their practice as Covenanters vowing to the LORD, is explicitly described, Isa. 44:5. For the neglect of making and keeping covenant engagements, calamities were poured out, as many evils overtook apostate Israel, Isa. 24:4-6; but to many, good was to follow, and a strict regard to these duties shall be paid when desolations shall cease, and the time shall arrive when the LORD of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, Isa. 24:23. Many were appointed or left to disobedience and condemnation, as Peter notes, 1 Pet. 2:7, 8; but to others, in terms implying that to every privilege and duty of the covenant they were no less—yea, assured appointed, 1 Pet. 2:5-7; the chief corner stone laid in Sion is presented as the ground of trust, instead of the covenant with death and hell which should not stand, Isa. 28:18. All founded on Him are therefore a covenant people, and hence, in that character, they were appointed, in terms of the OT, bearing on covenant relations and duties, a people appointed to obedience and life, 1 Pet. 2:9, 10.

The people of God, as a covenant people, were written in the book of life, Phil. 4:3. So, of the holy Jerusalem the Spirit testifies, Rev. 21:27. Whosoever enters therein, therefore, will not rank among those who, refusing to act as the children of the covenant, are denominated the uncircumcised and the unclean, Isa. 52:1. Thus, concerning the beast, those whose names are not written in the book of life are said to be given to worship him, Rev. 13:8. Their sin is idolatry and neither are they written in the book of life, who impenitently refraining from the obedience of a covenant people, virtually persevere in the service of any idols, till death arrests them, *cf.* Ezek. 6:4-6. It was to Israel as a people who had voluntarily in covenant dedicated themselves to His service, that the prophet addressed his message, Jer. 2:2, 3. And applicable to all who, such as they were, being in covenant are sanctified, is the promise of Isaiah, Isa. 4:3.

The covenant people of God are an elect people, Isa. 45:4. They were chosen to be separated from the wicked and from their works, Tit. 2:14. Thus, Israel were separated from the heathen, Deut. 7:6. Thus, all who believe are separated from those who know not nor obey the LORD, Deut. 6:13, 14; Ezek. 20:5-7. The answer of God to the lamentation of Elijah concerning the defection of Israel, is applied to believers of NT times, as a people in covenant chosen from the wicked, remained steadfast in God's covenant, Rom. 11:2-5.

The people of God were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, Eph. 1:4. Hence is a visible church erected therein, Eph. 1:10, 22, 23. Hence Israel, as a people, were endowed with peculiar privileges, Rom. 9:4. Hence the ordinances of Divine grace are dispensed in every age, Ps. 102:28. But all are not elect who wait on the institutions of religion, Rom. 9:6. Israel was chosen from among the heathen, Deut. 14:2; but all of them were not chosen in Christ, Rom. 2:28, 29. The members of the visible church, by profession, are separated from the world, Acts 2:42, 46; but all of them do not discharge the duties of God's elect, Col. 3:12. All are not Israel who are of Israel, Rom. 11:7. When the LORD entered into covenant with His people Israel, He chose them from among

idolaters, Josh. 24:2. He did so because of His choice of them from everlasting, Jer. 31:3; Rom. 8:30; Deut. 7:7, 8. Why the LORD will have mercy on Jacob, and will yet choose Israel, is, that He chose them from eternity, Isa. 14:1; Mal. 1:2, 3. And the LORD will have mercy on the Gentiles as a covenant people, set apart from the wicked, according to His eternal sovereign good will, Isa. 42:1, 6, 10-12. When Paul and Barnabas preached at Antioch in Pisidia, the Jews spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming, Acts 13:42-45. These apostles thereupon expressed their resolution to turn to the Gentiles, and they declare their warrant, Acts 13:46, 47. Nor was He, Who, that He might be a light to the Gentiles, was given for a covenant of the people, Isa. 49:8; then preached in vain, Acts 13:48.

The people of God were elected to covenant obedience, 2 Thess. 2:13. Israel were frequently represented both as His *elect* and as His *servants*, Isa. 45:4; 41:8, 9; Ps. 105:6. The elect are spoken of as formed and ordained to good works, Eph. 2:10. And those good works include the keeping of the covenant, by covenanting and fulfilling the engagements made, Eph. 2:11-13. So, the saints are described as elect unto obedience and sprinkling of blood, 1 Pet. 1:2. As the sprinkling of blood, signifying the application of the efficacy of Christ's death by the Spirit of God, was wont to accompany the exercise of covenanting by sacrifice, Ps. 50:5; Ex. 24:8; so, under the last dispensation, the obedience of the people of God, according to election, is to spring from their acceptance of Christ and His benefits, and dedication to God in the various acts of personal and social covenanting, Heb. 12:24. Finally, they are introduced at once as His witnesses, His servants, and His chosen, Isa. 43:10. They were therefore chosen to serve Him, by vowing and swearing to Him in secret, by testifying to His truths by oath before the world, and by adhering faithfully to His testimony, *cf.* Acts 2:32; 1 Tim. 6:12, 13; 2 Tim. 2:2.