

ORDINANCE OF COVENANTING.

(Covenanting Predicted in Prophecy)

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

Question 1.—*How does prophecy support social covenanting?*

Answer.—The fact of covenanting, under the OT dispensations, being approved of God, gives a proof that it was proper then, which is accompanied by the voice of prophecy, affording evidence that even in periods then future it should no less be proper, *cf.* Zech. 8:23 *with* Ezek. 16:8. The argument for the service that is afforded by prophecy is peculiar, and, though corresponding with evidence from other sources, is independent, *cf.* Luke 24:27. Because that God willed to make known truth through His servants the prophets, 2 Kings 21:10; we should receive it as transmitted by them, in a manner peculiarly calculated to invite attention, *cf.* 1 Pet. 1:10-12. A statute tells what, according to the authority of God, ought to be done, *cf.* Jas. 4:2; 2:10, 11. The revelation of God’s purposes unfolds precisely the same things as are to be done, but according to His sovereign arrangements made to lead them, *cf.* Rev. 5:5. Prophecy declares, indeed, the purposes of God, but specially the carrying of them into effect in individual cases, *cf.* 1 Kings 17:16. In the purposes of God, each fact agreeable to His will is provided for, *cf.* Isa. 46:10. In prophecy, such of these facts as He has resolved to make known are presented, Amos 3:7. The reality of the pre-intimation of these shows their importance, and points out that preparation ought to be made for them, *cf.* Gen. 6:13. The assurance that a fact of covenanting is predicted is a substantial argument for its lawfulness, *cf.* Deut. 10:20. The individuals, to perform it, may be urged by a variety of motives, *cf.* Josh. 2:1-4, 12-21; 6:22-25; yea, even by the promise in reference to their doing it, without knowing at the time that they were the special objects of the promise, *cf.* Ruth 4:21 *with* Matt. 1:5. The argument from prophecy derives its value from two things,—that the subject of prophetic intimation, as provided for by the LORD Himself, is warranted, *cf.* Prov. 8:7; and, that it is beyond the power of men either to fulfil it otherwise than He has arranged, or to prevent its accomplishment, *cf.* Dan. 4:24-35. Prophecy describes, with precision, facts that will take place, *cf.* 2 Chron. 18:27. Men are brought into the circumstances to which a prophecy refers, and they may be ignorant of the fact, *cf.* 1 Kings 22:6, 15-17. Afterwards, they know it, and attest the verity of the prediction, *cf.* 1 Kings 22:29-37. The descriptions afforded in prophecy concerning the circumstances of the truth predicted are not given to provide these circumstances, for that is done according to a sovereign Divine arrangement, *cf.* Ex. 6:8; but are afforded to show, after the fulfilment, that the truth was indeed that which had been foretold, Josh. 23:5, 15. Prophecies, that duty will be done, lead men to it, not as attracted by its circumstances, but as directed by the Divine counsel, *cf.* Deut. 9:23.

Prophecy, therefore, independently of its fulfilment, affords a reason for covenanting, *cf.* Isa. 45:23 *with* Phil. 2:10. Properly authenticated, it has the force of an argument, *cf.* Ps. 63:11. Shown to be prophecy, both by the circumstances in which it was uttered, and by the fulfilment, it is manifestly conducive to duty, *cf.* 2 Chron. 15:14, 15. The fulfilment of prophecy is a scriptural test of its truth, *cf.* Num. 16:29; but manifestations made of

Divine approbation to the prophet, even before what was uttered by him was fulfilled, also attest that such was of God, *cf.* Josh. 1:5-9. It is the prophecy, as authenticated by one or other, or both of these things, that gives encouragement to perform the service, *cf.* Num. 23:19. Did God speak by His servants in order to inform men, that His name should be called upon, in vowing and swearing unto Him? *cf.* Deut. 6:13. Then, because of such a peculiar manifestation of His will, the duty behooves to be performed, *cf.* Gen. 28:16-20 *with* 35:1. If the dictation of His will as a law in reference to the service had been sufficient, He would not otherwise have enjoined it, *cf.* Ex. 6:4, 5. And if His will manifested in that manner confers obligation, does not the regulation of it, in the condescending, though glorious language of prophecy, as well as otherwise, bind to duty? *cf.* Ps. 132:12. Shall He use any means to make His pleasure known, of which men, by giving obedience, will not testify their approbation? *cf.* Deut. 27:26. Shall God speak, and yet man not respond? *cf.* Ps. 106:48.

Question 2.—*Wherein does it appear that OT prophecy predicted covenanting in OT times?*

Answer.—Covenanting was predicted in prophecy in reference to OT times, *cf.* Jer. 4:2. The prophecies under this head may be divided in those of the *earlier* prophets, and those of the *later*: the *first* class includes in it, those of Jacob and Moses, and others, who were employed to predict the future circumstances of Israel, *cf.* Gen. 49:1; Deut. 31:24-30. Referring to the church of God as a covenant society, in general they foretold that the exercise of covenanting should be performed by its members as, for example, in the blessing of Moses on the tribe of Levi, Deut. 33:8-10. That prophecy, though not limited to the periods of the former dispensations, may be considered as specially including in it a prospective regard to every act of covenanting, in which the church and nation of Israel as such engaged after it was delivered, *cf.* Mal. 2:5-7. The predictions of the later prophets in regard to covenanting in the former ages, were fulfilled, on the return of the Jews from Babylon, Isa. 10:22; 28:15-22; Jer. 50:5. They were so explicit, and so soon fulfilled, as to afford most emphatically an exhibition of the will of God in regard to their object, *cf.* Ezra 10:3-5; Neh. 9:38; 13:25.

Question 3.—*Wherein does it appear that OT prophecy predicted covenanting in NT times?*

Answer.—Covenanting was predicted in prophecy in reference to NT times, both in the first and the later ages, the performance of the duty in these ages was foretold, as was intimated when it was foretold that the gathering of the people was to be to Messiah, Gen. 49:10. Many prophecies uttered concerning the restoration of Israel, refer to the present dispensation, *cf.* Jer. 31:31-34 *with* Heb. 8:8; and consequently, the predicted exercises of covenanting which these contain, to it also belong, Ezek. 34:25; 37:26. Corresponding to the prophetic intimation concerning a people who should be created to praise the LORD, is that of a new heavens and a new earth, Ps. 102:18-22; both are to be fulfilled in Gospel times, and by those who were to be created, engaging in the duty of taking hold on God's covenant, Isa. 65:16, 17. The Saviour was promised for a covenant of the people, and for a light of the Gentiles, Isa. 42:6; and also that He might establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolated heritages, Isa. 49:8. The last of the OT prophets, at the same time that he speaks of the covenant of the priesthood having been broken by the Jews, utters the prediction that the LORD's name shall be great among the Gentiles, Mal. 1:11; pre-intimates that all the heathen nations shall use the name of God in vowing and swearing

unto Him, *cf.* Matt. 28:19. Early was uttered the prophecy about Japheth dwelling in the tents of Shem, Gen. 9:27; and an illustration of this is given by the apostle, wherein the reference to covenanting is manifest, Rom. 3:29. Many passages besides, from the OT prophets, show that the Gentiles in their national capacities shall vow and swear to God, Ps. 22:27; Isa. 52:15; Zech. 2:11. And in the book of Revelation, the same is foretold, Rev. 11:15; 15:4. Explicit predictions are made concerning the Egyptians vowing a vow and performing it, and concerning the Assyrians along with them and Israel being reckoned as the LORD's people, which fall to be fulfilled in the later times, Isa. 19:18-25. And by the voice of prophecy we are assured, that by covenanting, in the last days, Israel and Judah shall be gathered and united as the LORD's people, *cf.* Isa. 11:13; Zeph. 3:9. By breaking of the staff "Beauty," a prophet was called to signify that the LORD's covenant with Israel was broken, Zech. 11:10; and by the cutting of the other staff, "Bands," he was directed to show, that the brotherhood—certainly one which had been professedly by covenant, between Judah and Israel should be broken, Zech. 11:14. But even an earlier prophet, by the use of the corresponding emblems,—of one stick for Judah and Israel his companions, in joining them into one stick, was commissioned to testify to their being joined to one another, in taking the LORD for their God, in the latter day, Ezek. 37:15-28. Referring to the words of sacred Psalmody, as prophetic, Ps. 18:49; an apostle unfolds the exercise of covenanting as incumbent until the latest times, Rom. 15:9. Yea, as the fruit of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, the service, in the loftiest terms, is foretold, *cf.* Ps. 68:18 *with* Rom. 14:11.