

ORDINANCE OF COVENANTING.

(The Solemn League and Covenant, Pt. 1.)

“That public, social covenanting, is an ordinance of God, obligatory on churches and nations under the New Testament; that the National Covenant and the Solemn League are an exemplification of this divine institution; and that these Deeds are of continued obligation upon the moral person.”—Fourth Term of Communion.

The Preface.

We, noblemen, barons, knights, gentlemen, citizens, burgesses, ministers of the Gospel, and commons of all sorts, in the kingdoms of Scotland, England, and Ireland, by the providence of GOD living under one king, and being of one reformed religion, having before our eyes the glory of God, and the advancement of the kingdom of our LORD and SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST, the honour and happiness of the king’s majesty and his posterity, and the true public liberty, safety, and peace of the kingdom, wherein every one’s private condition is included: and calling to mind the treacherous and bloody plots, conspiracies, attempts, and practices of the enemies of GOD, against the true religion and professors thereof in all places, especially in these three kingdoms, ever since the reformation of religion; and how much their rage, power, and presumption, are of late, and at this time, increased and exercised, whereof the deplorable state of the Church and kingdom of Ireland, the distressed state of the Church and kingdom of England, and the dangerous state of the Church and kingdom of Scotland, are present and public testimonies: we have now at last (after other means of supplication, remonstrance, protestation, and sufferings), for the preservation of ourselves and our religion from utter ruin and destruction, according to the commendable practice of these kingdoms in former times, and the example of GOD’s people in other nations, after mature deliberation, resolved and determined to enter into a Mutual and Solemn League and Covenant, wherein we all subscribe, and each one of us for himself, with our hands lifted up to the Most High GOD, do swear,

Question 1.—Is it incumbent upon men of all ranks and stations to engage in public social covenanting, and especially on those who are ministers of the Gospel?

Answer.—Yes. Deut. 29:9-11; 2 Kings 23:1-3; 2 Chron. 34:29-32. Every man is, in charity, bound to be an angel to unmindful Jacob, in point of his vow to God, and monitor his back-sliding brother, Rom. 15:14. But it especially belongs to Gospel ministers, who are God’s watchmen against sin, and his people’s remembrancers unto duty, who are not only by common charity, but also by special office, bound to give warning against approaching evil, contracting guilt, and impending judgments of God, and that as they will acquit themselves from the blood of those immortal souls, who slip into, and perish by their sin, Isa. 62:6 (“make mention of the LORD,” literally, “the LORD’s remembrancers”); Ezek. 3:16-20; 33:7-9.

Question 2.—Ought the highest end of any covenant to be the glory of God?

Answer.—Yes. 1 Cor. 10:31. It is the great principle of the Christian faith to believers and the chief end of all men to do all that they do to the glory of God, Col. 3:17, 23. Covenanting is an ordinance of divine worship, which has for its great and leading design, to give homage to God, by an avowal of our complete subjection to, and dependence upon Him, Isa. 59:21. Thus, Scripture presents covenanting as, not only swearing by the Lord of hosts, but as a swearing to Him, Isa. 45:23-25; 56:6. To the same effect is that described in the New Testament, Rom. 12:1; 2 Cor. 8:5.

Question 3.—Ought public social covenants to take in the honor and happiness of the supreme magistrate?

Answer.—Yes. Josh. 1:8, 9. What was written to Joshua is applicable to all who rule, Deut. 17:18, 19. The duties of lawful civil governors and of the people under them owing

by these classes respectively to one another ought to be vowed, Ezra 10:3. They are duties to God, Ps. 47:7. They are therefore included in the oath of allegiance which both kings and subjects ought to swear to Him, 2 Kings 11:17. If a civil constitution is according to the word of God, if the rulers who carry its ordinances into effect are men fearing God and hating covetousness, Ex. 18:21; 2 Sam. 23:3; and if they dispense in a righteous manner its just laws, obedience is due by the people, and ought to be vowed to God, 1 Pet. 2:13, 14. That cannot be done completely for the Lord's sake, which is not vowed to Him, Num. 30:2.

Question 4.—*Ought public social covenants to be concerned with true public liberty, safety and peace, including every one's private condition?*

Answer.—Yes. Gal. 6:10. Everyone ought to promote the welfare of his neighbor, Phil. 2:4. "Am I my brother's keeper?" is, in every age, the motto only of the murderer, *cf.* Gen. 4:9. Thus, various duties of the members of civil society are proper matter of solemn covenant engagement, 2 Chron. 34:30-32.

Question 5.—*Should those engaging in public social covenanting be motivated by a concern for the unity in civil government and religion?*

Answer.—Yes. Luke 11:2. The coming of God's kingdom consists in two things: 1.) The subduing of the nations to His Gospel, Ps. 9:17; Rev. 11:15. The kingdoms of this world are established and unified in lawful constitutions when the hand of God is upon them, 1 Kings 2:12; Dan. 4:34-37; and they are dissolved by disregard of the commands of the Lord, 1 Sam. 13:13, 14. 2.) The unity of God's people in His truth, Ps. 133:1; Eph. 4:13. This occurs when all God's people are joined in the same confession and judgment, 1 Cor. 1:10; Phil. 3:16.

Question 6.—*Should those engaging in public social covenanting be motivated by a remembering of the plots of the enemies of God against the true religion, both past and present?*

Answer.—Yes. Ps. 50:15. The remembrance of those who have plotted against the true religion should be recorded for this purpose, Est. 2:21-23; such a book of remembrance is of great use to those who truly fear the LORD, in the cause of true religion, Mal. 3:16. The remembrance of such is, in the providence of God, the beginning of the overthrow of all present and future plots against the same truth, Est. 6:1-3. Moreover, the knowledge of both past designs of the enemies of God and His true religion along with any present conflicts provide suitable motives for engaging in public social covenanting, Judg. 11:12-21, 30-32.

Question 7.—*Should those engaging in public social covenanting be motivated by the lack of prevailing by means of supplications, remonstrances, protestations and sufferings?*

Answer.—Yes. 2 Chron. 29:10. It is the duty of the people of God to take hold of and make use of all of the means of supplication, remonstrance, protest and suffering, as called to by providence, Est. 5:6-8. However, when other means fail, it behooves God's people to lay hold upon God Himself and bind themselves to Him by means of covenanting that the church and the nation might prosper, 2 Chron. 15:3-7, 12-15. Thus, the Corinthians, when challenged to fulfil their duty, first entered into covenant that they might better discharge their obligations from a willing heart, 2 Cor. 8:5, 12.

Question 8.—*Should those engaging in public social covenanting be motivated by the commendable practice of those reforming fathers gone before and the examples of God's people elsewhere?*

Answer.—Yes. Song 1:8. The example of the people of God, while they walk in all his ordinances and commandments blameless, is a warranted motive to duty, 1 Cor. 11:1. Were we doubtful whether or not their observance of covenanting was according to the will of God, we should not be encouraged by it, *cf.* Rom. 14:1. But when assured of its consistency with the Divine record, we are called to follow it, Heb. 6:11, 12.

Question 9.—*Is it proper that such public social covenants be entered into with hands lifted up to the Most High God, calling upon His Name?*

Answer.—Yes. Ezek. 20:5; Heb. 6:13. Thus does the Lord represent Himself as swearing or covenanting with His people, Isa. 55:3. An oath is sworn with the lifting up of the right hand, Dan. 12:7; Rev. 10:5, 6. So, we have this example recorded in the life of Abraham, the father of all the faithful, Gen. 14:22. Also, we see this in the admonition of Hezekiah, 2 Chron. 30:8 (“Yield”—literally, *give the hand*—“yourselves unto the LORD”).